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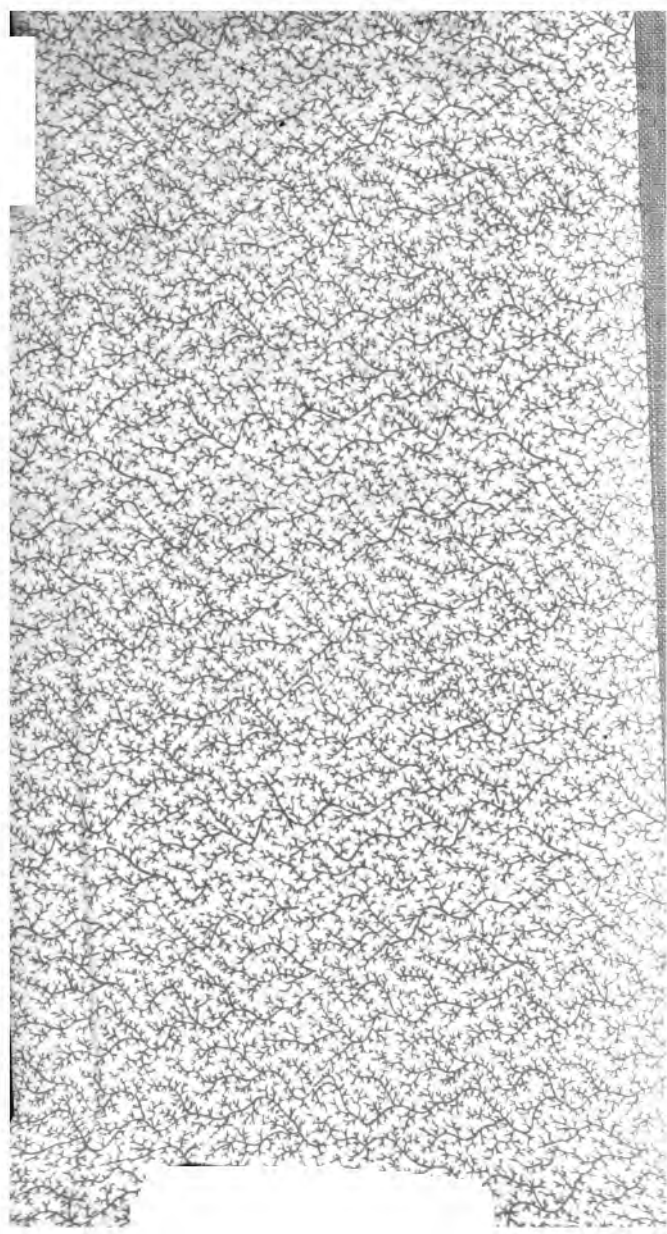
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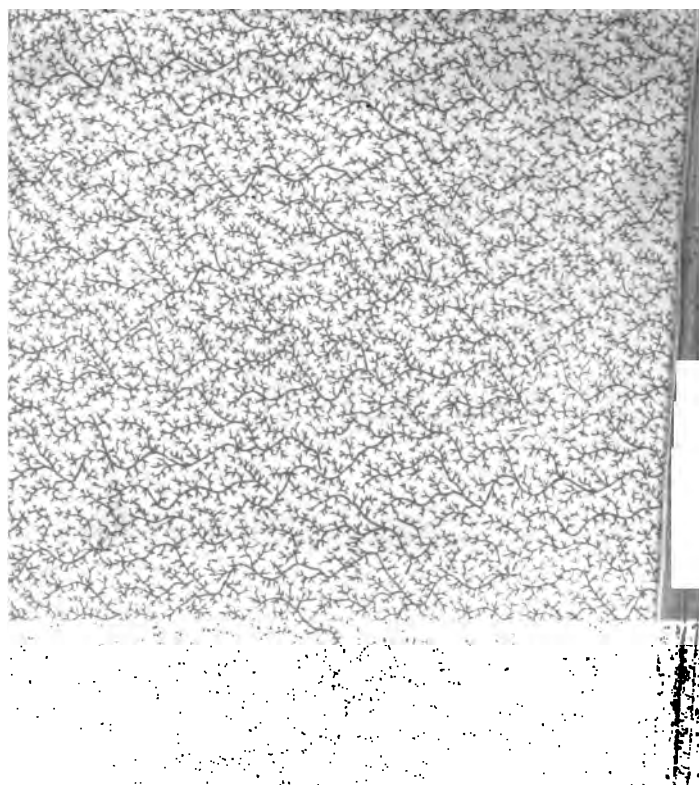
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VILLAGE SERMONS:

OR

SIXTY-FIVE

PLAIN AND SHORT DISCOURSES

ON THE PRINCIPAL

DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL:

INTENDED FOR THE USE OF

FAMILIES, SUNDAY SCHOOLS, OR COMPANIES

ASSEMBLED FOR RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

IN COUNTRY VILLAGES.

BY GEORGE BURDER.

7 VOLUMES IN 3.

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Come, let us go forth into the Field; let us lodge in the Villages.
Sol. Senr.

WOODWARD'S SEVENTH CORRECTED EDITION.

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SERMON I.

THE CONVERSION OF THE JAILER.

Acts xvi. 30, 31. *Sirs, what must I do to be saved ? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*

THE question I have read to you was asked by the jailer at Philippi, and the answer was given by Paul and Silas. The case was this : Paul and Silas were taken up for preaching the gospel, and brought before the rulers. The rulers unjustly caused them to be severely whipped, and then “ cast them into prison, charging the Jailer to keep them safely ; who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.”

But these good men were not unhappy ; their Master was with them, according to his gracious promise, and filled their hearts with joy ; so that, even at midnight, they could not refrain from singing praises to God ; and their fellow prisoners, in other dungeons, heard them with surprise.

Just then, that God might shew his regard to them, and his anger against their persecutors, there was, all on a sudden, a very great and awful earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken by it. At the same time, all the doors flew open ; and all the bands and fetters that were on them, and the rest of the prisoners, dropped off at once.

The keeper of the jail, starting up from his sleep, and finding the prisoners at liberty, was so terrified lest he should be charged with a breach of trust in letting them escape, that he drew his sword, and was going to stab himself.

But Paul, knowing his wicked design, and moved with pity for him, though he had used them so ill, cried out

aloud, "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here." The Jailer, calling for a light, ran with all speed into the inner prison; and being full of horror at such an appearance of God in favour of his servants, and, at the same time, struck by the Holy Spirit with a deep conviction of his own guilt and danger, he threw himself on the ground before them, and asked their direction for the relief of his soul, in the words of our text: "Sirs, what must I do to 'be saved?'" A more important question was never asked. It becomes every one to make the inquiry; and if any one of you have never before seriously made it, God grant you may do so now! The answer given, and the only proper answer that could be given, was, "Believe on 'the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'" May the Lord assist us while we consider these two parts of the text!

I. *An important question.*

II. *A gospel answer.*

I. *The question.* It is in few words, but they are full of meaning. Let us examine it. And I shall consider it, first,

As the language of conviction. By conviction, I mean the work of the Holy Spirit on the mind of a sinner, whereby he is convinced that he is a sinner, and is properly affected with it. Without this, people try to excuse or lessen their sins. Some lay the blame of their sin upon others, as Adam did upon Eve, and as Eve did upon the serpent. People in general think very little, and very lightly, of their sin. Some even make a mock at sin, and glory in it. This is a sad state to be in. Such persons are very far from God, and have no religion at all, whatever they may pretend to have. Such were the Pharisees, who were thought to be very religious; but they generally despised and opposed Jesus Christ; for, as he told them, "the whole need not a physician, but those who are sick."

But it is a good thing to be sensible of our sin. It is the first work of God upon the soul to make us so. For this purpose we must consider the holy law of God contained in the Ten Commandments. "By the law is the *knowledge of sin*;" and, "Sin is the transgression of *the law*." Thus St. Paul himself came to see he was a

you are, how gladly will you hear the true way to salvation, as declared by these inspired servants of our Lord. This is contained in the second part of our subject ; or,

II. *The gospel answer*, given to the Jailer's question. This short and plain answer is the only true one that can be given to the important inquiry ; and it is of vast importance that a convinced soul be led in the right way. I am afraid that some men, some ministers, would not have given this answer, *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*. I am afraid, that if a person, under that sense of sin which I have described, were to go to an ungodly minister, and say, O sir, what must I do to be saved ? he would give different advice. He would say, " I hope you have done nothing very bad. You have not killed any body. You have not robbed any body. You are no worse than your neighbours. I would have you lay aside such gloomy notions. Go into company, and be amused. Continue to do your duty, and you need not fear. But be sure you do not go among the Methodists ; they will drive you mad." But you may learn from the text, that it is no madness to be concerned for the salvation of our souls, nor to be earnest in learning how we must be saved. The Jailer never acted a more rational part, nor asked a wiser question, than in this instance. *They* are the madmen, who sell their souls for the short lived pleasures of sin. You may also learn from this passage, *who* are the true ministers of Christ ; they are those who preach him, and direct you to flee to him for salvation. Now all these, with one accord, in all countries, and of all parties, will unite and say " Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

And here you may observe how false that notion is, which some people maintain of zealous ministers, namely, that they preach nothing but damnation ; whereas the subject of what we preach is *salvation*. If we say any thing of damnation, it is that you may avoid it, and flee to Christ, as the Deliverer from it. There is no need for the vilest sinner to despair. St. Paul says to the Jailer, though he had been a very bad man, " Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The gos-

his presence. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide the fierceness of his anger?" Nahum i. 3—6. This is that dreadful God, who hath said, "that the wicked shall be turned into hell, with all who forget him." Shall we not fear him then? shall we not tremble at his presence? "Yea, saith the Lord, I say unto you, fear him who can not only kill the body, but cast both body and soul into hell." O! how would you shudder to see a fellow creature burning at a stake; how would you wish that death would speedily end his pain! But how would you feel, to see him burn a whole hour, a whole day, a whole week, and all the time filling the air with horrid shrieks, and crying in vain for ease or death? Horrid as this would be, it gives but a faint idea of hell; that dreadful place of torment, "where the worm dieth not, and where the fire is not quenched." It was the dread of this that made the Jailer cry, "what must I do to be saved?" And it was well for him, that he foresaw the evil, and found a refuge from it. God grant we may all do the same. But there is more in the question.

It is also the language of *Desire*; earnest, ardent, desire. The natural man desires only carnal things. What shall I eat, what shall I drink, what shall I wear? How may I be rich, and happy, and respected? or, as the Psalmist expresses it, "Who will shew me any good?" any worldly good, any temporary good. But "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The awakened soul has new desires; or, rather, all his desires are brought into one, and that one is salvation. "What shall I do to be *saved*?—to be delivered from the wrath to come; to have my sins pardoned; to be restored to the divine favour?" This is now "the one thing needful." Without this, all other things are of no value; they are less than nothing, and vanity, compared with salvation. This earnest desire will soon be expressed in prayer. For the sinner knows that salvation can come only from God; and, as it was remarked by Christ himself, concerning Saul when converted, "Behold he prayeth;" so it will always be found, that the *desire* of the new-born soul will vent itself in prayer. Those *who live without prayer* are strangers to this desire, and *are totally destitute of religion.*

The question in our Text is likewise the language of *Hope*. I do not mean a lively and believing hope, founded upon the gospel, but a feeble, wavering hope, arising from a general notion of the mercy of God. For there is in the minds of all mankind, some notion that God is merciful, and may possibly pardon; and though this is too often abused, and people encourage themselves by it to go on in sin, yet it is of great service to convince sinners, and keeps them from despair, till the Spirit of God leads them by the gospel to know that there is indeed forgiveness with him, and that the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin. Therefore the poor Jailer, though a blind Heathen, does not say, "There is no mercy for me; I am such a sinner I never can be saved." But his question seems to say, as the repenting Ninevites said, on the preaching of Jonah, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger that we perish not?" Jonah iii. 9.

Once more, we may observe, that the Jailer's question includes a *Confession of his Ignorance*. He wanted to be saved, but he knew not *how*; nor can any man know this aright till he is taught of God. It is the true character of natural men, as mentioned Rom. iii. 17. that "the way of peace they have not known." By the fall of man, in Adam, "darkness has covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." And this is the state, not only of the blind Heathens, who have not the Bible, but of a great many called Christians. How many are there, among *us*, who are entirely ignorant of the way in which poor sinners are saved by Jesus Christ? But; to remove this fatal darkness, Christ, the Sun of righteousness, hath arisen upon the earth. He is the light of the world; and he has commanded his ministers to "preach the gospel to every creature." Paul and Silas were so employed before they were cast into prison. It had been declared in the city concerning them—"These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation," ver. 17. As soon, therefore, as the Jailer was convinced of his need of salvation, and his ignorance, he earnestly desires to be taught by them. He no longer reviles and abuses *these ministers of Christ*, but applies to them for

neighbours. Thus let us immediately separate ourselves from the vain world, and boldly confess to whom we belong; while we shew the strongest affection to the ministers and people of God.

SERMON II.

THE BROAD AND THE NARROW WAY.

Matt. vii. 13, 14. Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be which find it.

IT is with great propriety, that human life is compared to a journey, and every man to a traveller; for life is very short, and the present state is not our final rest, but only preparatory to it. Every man has some particular point at which he aims, and is daily travelling either to heaven or hell.

These words must have great weight with all who reverence the name and authority of Jesus Christ; for they are his words, and they contain matter of eternal importance to us all. They consist of a short exhortation—"Enter ye in at the strait gate;" and a very important reason for preferring that to the wide gate: for the wide gate leads to destruction, but the narrow one to eternal life. In discoursing on the text, let us consider,

I. The wide gate, and the broad way, with the end of it.

II. The strait gate, and the narrow way, with what it leads to. And,

III. Enforce the exhortation—"Enter ye in at the strait gate."

And now, O thou that beholdest the evil and the good; Thou who knowest every heart, and seest which of these ways we are in, make the word useful to us all, and incline poor sinners to choose the narrow way, that so they may find everlasting life!

I. We are to consider the wide gate, and the broad

way. And what is this but sin? If there is a way to hell, sin is certainly that way, for "the wages of sin is death;" but let such persons remember, that "what a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "If we live after the flesh, we shall die," Rom. vi. 23. But, to be more particular, this broad way includes, *a thoughtless mind, a carnal heart, and a wicked life.*

1. A thoughtless mind. And O how common this is! How many live as thoughtless about their souls, as if they had none. They think no more of God, and Christ, and salvation, than if they were incapable of thinking; they are like the beasts that perish. Although the great end of our being is, to know, serve, and glorify God; yet this is wholly lost sight of and forgotten. Although the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and the care of the soul is the one thing needful; yet thousands, even in this Christian country, live like Atheists, and God is not in all their thoughts. O prodigious and lamentable stupidity! Awake, O sleeper, arise, and call upon thy God, lest thou perish! Where is thy conscience? What says death? Is it not approaching? O rouse yourselves from this dangerous lethargy, and think what you are, and where you are going. Some of you may be free from the grosser vices: not chargeable, perhaps, with profaneness or drunkenness; yet know, that if living in ease and security, without any care about your soul and eternity, you are, equally with the vilest characters, in the broad road to destruction.

Again, *The carnal or filthy heart* is included; so the Holy Ghost describes the heart of man in its natural and depraved state. The immortal mind of man, originally created in the image of God, and formed for spiritual exercises, is now, by the fall of Adam, become carnal. So St. Paul speaks in the 8th of Romans, verse the 5th, "They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." The carnal man is all for the world. His cares, his hopes, his fears, his desires, his pleasures, his pains, his conversation, is all about the world. His fleshly mind is crowded with worldly thoughts, and, as it was at Bethlehem, there is no room for Christ in the inn. But let it be observed, *that whoever is in this case is in the broad road;*

for the scripture declares, that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God," and that this "carnal mind is enmity against God." This is the miserable condition of many, who pass for moral, industrious, good sort of people; but they are far from God;—they are "sensual, not having the Spirit;" and minding only earthly things, their end is destruction. Phil. iii. 19.

Once more, observe, that the broad way includes—A *wicked life*. A life of sin. Whoever lives in wilful disobedience to the commands of God is assuredly in the road to destruction. Let none deceive themselves with vain words and idle excuses. "He that committeth sin is of the devil," 1 John iii. 8. "Know ye not," saith the Apostle Paul, "that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, shall inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. God will not hold him guiltless, who taketh his name in vain; nor will the sabbath-breaker escape unpunished. How is it then, that poor sinners flatter themselves with hopes of salvation; "for these things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience," Eph. v. 6.

To these destructive sins another may be added, which is more destructive than them all; namely, the sin of unbelief. Though a person should be free from many of the sins just mentioned, yet unbelief would be like a millstone about his neck, and sink him for ever into the gulf of perdition. God having, in his rich mercy to mankind, sent his Son to be a Saviour, and sent his gospel to publish this in our ears, nothing can be more displeasing to him than to "neglect his great salvation," or "refuse him that speaketh from heaven." Our blessed Saviour, while he mercifully promises, that "he who believeth shall be saved;" solemnly declares, that "he who believeth not shall be damned." Mark xvi. 16.

This, then, is the wide gate and the broad way—namely, a thoughtless mind—a carnal heart—and a wicked life; all which, by unbelief, which refuses the only method of salvation, lead to certain and everlasting ruin.

But you will ask, Why are these things so described? Why are they compared to a wide gate and a broad way?

The reason is plain ; for as it is easy to go through a wide gate and walk in a broad road, so the sinner finds no hindrance to his entering on a life of sin, and little or no difficulty in pursuing it.

Our corrupt nature strongly inclines us to sin. David says, "We are conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity," Psalm li. 5. ; and that "the wicked are estranged from the womb ; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." You know that children need no teacher to make them wicked. Sin is in our very nature, and we walk in this road of our own accord ; it is natural and pleasant to us : while we as naturally dislike the narrow road, and despise those who walk in it.

Besides, those who are in the broad road meet with no hindrances from the world or from the devil. The broad way is the way of the world ; for, as the Apostle John saith, "The whole world lieth in wickedness," except the happy few who are delivered from it by the grace of God. In this broad way all ranks of men may be seen, from kings and princes, down to slaves and beggars. Now it is easy to walk in a broad road with a multitude, provided they are all going one way, which is the case here ; and the world will love its own. In this road, persons feel the great force of example, and plead, you know, for what they do, by the commonness of it, or its being the way of the world. They are afraid of appearing singular, even though conscience sometimes remonstrates against their evil courses. The pleasures of sin entice them to go forward, notwithstanding every warning of their danger ; and the hopes of gain, and the favour of mankind, seduce them ; for these they are afraid of losing, if they become religious.

This road is wide and easy, because the devil gives no disturbance to them that walk in it. While "the strong man armed keeps the house, the goods are in peace." He strongly opposes the people of God who are in the narrow way ; he disputes every inch of ground with them ; but he is in league with these ; he endeavours to keep them from all fear of consequences ; he blinds their minds, lest the light of the gospel should shine into them : and he fills their hearts with prejudices against faithful preachers, who would point out their sin and danger. Yea, he takes

the same course with them as he did with our first mother, when he tempted her to eat the forbidden fruit. God had said, "If ye eat it ye shall surely die;" but this father of lies directly contradicts the threatening, and induces her to eat, by saying, "Ye shall not surely die." So in this case our Saviour plainly declares, that the broad road of sin leads to destruction; but Satan deceives poor sinners, and prevails upon them to believe, that, though they live in sin and unbelief, they shall not experience the destruction threatened.

But who will you believe—the God of truth, or the father of lies? Observe the text: "The broad road leads to destruction;" and O think what that destruction is. Think what "a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God." Think, O think, of "the worm that never dies, and the fire that is never quenched." What would you not do to prevent the destruction of your property, the destruction of your dear relations, the destruction of your life? But what are all these to your soul, your immortal soul? "For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Well, then, would you avoid this destruction, and surely you would, this broad road must be forsaken; and, blessed be God, that it is not yet too late to forsake it; and you must enter into the narrow way, by the strait gate mentioned in the text. Let us therefore, in the second place,

II. Consider what is meant by the strait gate, and the narrow way, and what it leads to.

The design of these expressions is to shew, that the entrance into a religious course of life is painful and difficult, and that tribulation is to be expected in our progress. We may include the whole in three words, **REPENTANCE, FAITH, and HOLINESS**; a little examination of these particulars will prove the propriety of the phrases in the text.

John the Baptist, our Saviour, and his Apostles, all went out and preached **REPENTANCE**; and without this we are assured men must perish. Now repentance cannot but be painful, for it consists chiefly in a godly sorrow for sin, *together* with a firm resolution to forsake it at all events, *and whatever it may cost us*. The penitent sinner, being

iced that he has sinned, and come short of the glory d ; that he has by sin destroyed himself, and become to the dreadful wrath of God, perceives that he has life been acting a most foolish and hurtful part ; but e must now forsake all his sins, though dear to him right eye, and useful to him as his right hand. Now s appears to a natural man irksome and unpleasant. unwilling to think seriously of his sins and of their onsequences, and still more unwilling to part with

He therefore shuns this, as a man would avoid g through a very strait and low door, when a spa- one offered itself at the same time.

TH is also intended by the narrow way. " By grace : saved through faith," and " without faith it is im- le to please God." True faith consists in so believ- e gospel of Jesus Christ, as to take him for our aviaour ; utterly renouncing all dependence on our orks and righteousness ; submitting to be saved by re favour of God in Christ, as a poor beggar is re- by an alms. Jesus Christ is, himself, the way. " I, e, (John xiv. 6.) I am the way ;"—no man cometh Father but by me ; and it is by faith that we walk way ; for all true christians live by faith, and walk od by faith.

r this way of living, renouncing all our own works, t of dependence, and accounting them, in that re- as " dung and dross, that we may win Christ ;" y is so contrary to our natural inclinations, and so ng to a self-righteous spirit, that it may well be call- urrow way. There are thousands who are so proud r good hearts and their good works, that they scorn edebted to Christ for his righteousness. They think ves rich, and increased with goods, and that they n need of nothing, while, in fact, they are poor, ed, miserable, blind and naked, Rev. iii. 18. The g Pharisee, whom we read of in the gospel, was llen with the pride of his duties and works, that he ot enter in at the strait gate ; but the poor Publi- o saw and felt himself a sinner, stooping low before attered it, crying out, " God be merciful to me a
,"

The way of holiness is also a narrow way. Holiness consists in the conformity of our will to the will of God ; It is produced by the power of the Holy Spirit in the regeneration of a sinner. The law of God is written on his heart ; whereby he is disposed to resist temptation, to forsake sin, and to practise obedience to the commands of God. In doing this, we must deny ourselves, take up our daily cross, and follow Christ. We must mortify the flesh, with its affections and lusts. We must crucify the old man of sin, and walk, not according to the course of the world, nor according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. Now, in doing this, we cannot but meet with difficulties. We shall meet with continual opposition from our own corruptions, the law in our members warring against the law of our minds. We shall also suffer reproach and contempt from the world ; for all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. And besides all this, God our heavenly Father sees it necessary to chastise us with the rod of affliction, of which all his children are partakers, for spiritual good.

Considering therefore the nature of Repentance, Faith and Holiness, we clearly see how properly a true christian may be said to enter upon a religious life by a strait gate, and to proceed in it by a narrow way.

But here, perhaps, an objection may be started. Does not our Lord say,—“Take my yoke upon you, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light?” Does not Solomon say, “The ways of wisdom are pleasantness, and her paths peace?” And does not St. John say, that “Christ’s commands are not grievous?” How then is it true, that the gate is strait, and the way narrow?

I answer, the ways of religion are perfectly easy and pleasant in their own nature ; the difficulty arises from the depravity and corruption of our nature. Angels do the will of God with perfect ease and pleasure, for they have no sin in their nature to oppose it. But through the power of sin in our hearts, the entrance into religion becomes painful and difficult, and through the remains of it in regenerate persons, more or less of that difficulty is found in the whole journey. Yet grace renders it practicable, and often pleasant ; so that no believer repents of his choice,

nor wishes to turn back because of the hardships he endures ; but, like Moses of old, " chooses rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season ; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt"—and for the same good reason—having " respect to the recompence of reward." And this leads us to the last particular, namely,

III. To enforce the exhortation, " Enter ye in at the strait gate."

O how wise, how gracious, how reasonable, is this advice ! May God dispose of all our hearts to obey it ! There are but two ways that we can travel ; the one leads to eternal misery ; the other to eternal bliss ! and that we may not miss our way, the blessed Jesus clearly marks out the right one, so that we cannot mistake—the gate is strait, the way is narrow, and there are few travellers in it. It is true, there are difficulties in the way, but heaven will make amends for all. Heaven is worth every thing, or it is worth nothing. Let us not be such cowards as to be frightened at a little trouble. Nothing, even in this life, can be attained without it. A child cannot learn to read without difficulty. A boy cannot learn a trade without pains. We cannot carry on any business without care or labour. But are we therefore prevented from these things ? No, we wisely consider the advantage, and act accordingly.

Neither let us be swayed by numbers. " Follow not a multitude to do evil." Let us not think ourselves right, because we do as others. We must suspect ourselves if we do. The broad road is thronged with travellers ; but the narrow has only a pilgrim here and there. And this should keep us from being ashamed of singularity in a good cause. Christ here teaches us to expect that religion will have few advocates comparatively. God grant that we, however, may be of that happy number !

Well then, let us by divine grace, resolve on eternal life at all events. On the one hand, here is a broad road, full of passengers, in which it is true, the poor paltry perishing, intoxicating pleasure of sin may be enjoyed for a moment, though not without many a pang ; and at the end of this short course is—O tremble, my soul, at the thought—

Destruction!—not ceasing to be, but an utter end of all pleasure for evermore. Misery, pains, torments, without mitigation, without cessation, without end. Everlasting separation from the presence of God, the fountain of life; and confinement in chains of darkness, with devils and damned spirits, to all eternity.

On the other hand, God has set before us the way of life. The entrance is strait, the way is narrow. Difficulties indeed there are; but grace lessens them all, and sweetens them all; so that the worst of Christ's way is better than the best of Satan's way; and, what is best of all, the end is eternal life. And O, what tongue can tell, what heart conceive, what God has laid up for them that love him! Is there a redeemed soul in glory, who now repents of the pains he took in religion? Does he repent of his repentance? Does he regret that he believed in the Son of God? Is he sorry that he walked in the ways of holiness? O no. Each glorified saint reviews with ecstasy of joy, the rich grace of God, that enabled him to discover the danger of that broad road in which he once travelled, and that placed his feet in the narrow but sure and safe road to eternal bliss.

Obey then the words of our Lord in another place, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate."—Agonize to do it. Do it at all events. Do it directly. Let not a moment be lost. "Escape for your lives; look not behind you; neither tarry ye in all the plain: escape to the mountain, lest ye be consumed." Fly from the wrath to come. "For many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able." (Luke xiii. 24.) Many, who would willingly go to heaven, seek after it in so cold, and slothful a manner, or by such false and mistaken ways, that they never obtain it: and O how many, who now neglect it altogether, will knock for admittance when the door is shut. Now, therefore, while it is called to-day, let us hear his voice. Let us be diligent in observing the sabbath, attending on the preached word as often as possible, reading the scriptures daily; and, especially, let us wrestle hard with God in prayer, that he would give us his Spirit, to teach and assist us, and work in our hearts that deep repentance, that true faith, and that genuine holiness, which are the proper exercises of all who travel in the narrow way to heaven.

The almost Christian and Apostate.

BROAD is the road that leads to death,
And thousands walk together there;
But wisdom shows a narrower path,
With here and there a traveller.

"Deny thyself, and take thy cross,"
Is the Redeemer's great command!
Nature must count her gold but dross,
If she would gain the heav'nly land.

The fearful soul that tires and faints,
And walks the ways of God no more,
Is but esteemed almost a saint,
And makes his own destruction sure.

Lord, let not all my hopes be vain;
Create my heart entirely new;
Which hypocrites could ne'er attain;
Which false apostates never knew.

WATTS.

SERMON III.

THE NATURE, SPIRITUALITY, AND USE OF THE LAW.

Rom. vii. 9.—For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

IT is a most true maxim of Scripture, that "The whole need not a physician; but those who are sick." The church of Christ has been justly compared to an hospital, to which none but the sick repair; no wonder then that the gay and healthy shun it. But whether we know it or not, our souls are sadly and dangerously diseased; and the worst symptom of all is, we know it not.

It may not be pleasant to a person to be told of any thing amiss in his health, his family, or his affairs; yet he is a true friend who gives the information, and he is a wise man who thankfully receives it. With this view, John the Baptist was sent before Christ; by preaching repentance to prepare the way for him: and the disciples of John gladly received the Saviour. Without the knowledge of ourselves, as sinners, we cannot understand the gospel, nor prize Jesus. And this is the true key to what would otherwise be unaccountable—the general neglect of the great salvation. When our Lord himself and his inspired

Apostles, with every possible advantage, preached the gospel, few believed the heavenly report; almost all, with one consent, began to make excuse; one going to his farm, and another to his merchandize. Now, as men are all alive to worldly pleasure and profit, it is evident, that their neglect arises from ignorance of their true state; and this is from their ignorance of the law of God, which is the only certain rule and standard by which to measure ourselves.

Hence, St. Paul designing in this Epistle to treat fully concerning the great point of justification, or being made righteous before God, takes care, in the first place, to prove that all men in the world are sinners—the Gentiles against the law of nature, and the Jews against the written law, or ten commandments. He well knew the importance of this method, by his own experience; for he says in the text, “he was alive without the law once,” &c. that is, when he was unconverted, and a proud pharisee, he had high swelling thoughts of himself; thought all was well between God and him; he did not see himself dead in law, being justly condemned by it for his sin; but he was all alive in his own opinion; and his mistake arose from ignorance of the law. He was “without the law;” not without the letter of it; he could have said it by heart: but he did not know its spiritual meaning and high requirements. But when the commandment came, especially the tenth commandment; when it came in the light and energy of the Holy Spirit to his mind and conscience; when he saw that it reached to the thoughts, principles, views, and desires of the heart, as well as to his words and actions; requiring perfect purity, and condemning for a single sin, even in thought—then, saith he, then “sin revived, and I died.” Then he saw thousands of things to be sins, which he never thought such before; and he found sin had full power and life in him; sin revived in his conscience; he saw it in all its dreadful terror, as justly exposing him to the wrath of God; and he fell under a sense of death, and condemnation, as a man dead in law, and deserving to die eternally.

Now, that we may rightly understand the law, and that it may be, “our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ,” let us,

First, Take a view of the holy law, by which is the knowledge of sin; and,

Secondly, Consider the proper effect of a work of the law on the heart.

I. Let us take a view of the holy law of God; for hereby is the knowledge of sin.

Remember, my friends, that God, who is the maker of the world, is also the governor of it. God prefaces his law with these words, *I am Jehovah*, the self-existent Being, the source of all being, on whom all beings depend: and he adds, *I am thy God*, to remind the Jews of their relation to him; for they were his professed worshippers, as we also are. He adds, *who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage*. Here are their obligations to him on account of their wonderful deliverance; so the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ lays them under infinite obligations to holy obedience. Man is a rational being, and accountable to God for his conduct. Brutes are led by instinct; but it is fit that man should be led by proper motives, willingly to obey his Maker's will. Now from the first, God gave a law to man. It was not indeed written. There was no occasion for it. Men lived almost a thousand years, and could easily teach their children what God at first taught Adam. At length, however, God saw fit to give his law from Mount Sinai, in dreadful thunders; and also to write it on two tables of stone.

You will observe, that the law of God is summed up in one word, namely, LOVE; and that this love has two objects: *Love to God*, for what he is in himself, and for the blessings he gives us; and *Love to Man*, for God's sake.

The love we owe to God is to be expressed in four ways; and these are set forth in the first four commandments.

The *first* commandment is, *Thou shalt have no other gods but me*. This requires us to know and confess the true God, Father, Son, and holy Spirit, as the only living God, and our God; in opposition to all idolatry; it requires us also to love and adore him, as the author of our being, and the source of our happiness; and this commandment is broken, not only by worshipping other gods, but by setting our idols in our hearts, by excessive self-

love, or love of creatures, relations, money, or gratifications of the flesh ; so that, according to this, there are many Atheists, living without God in the world, and many idolaters, worshipping the creature.

The *second* commandment forbids all worship of Images ; and requires us to worship God in the way he has appointed ; but, alas ! how many wholly neglect and despise his worship ! How many worship God with various superstitions and inventions of men ! How many others forget that God is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and truth ! What levity and folly do many mix with their pretended devotions : But in vain do we thus mock God, and play the hypocrite, drawing nigh to him with the lips, when our hearts are far from him. The reason added to this commandment, *for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God*, &c. shews how extremely displeasing to him it is to neglect his worship, or worship him in an improper manner, and that he will resent this sin not only to the persons who commit it, but to their posterity.

The third commandment forbids the taking the Lord's name in vain. But, O ! how awful is the common practice of cursing and swearing ! We may truly say "because of swearing the land mourneth ;" the breath of some men is nothing but blasphemy ; "their throat is an open sepulchre ;" the stench of their profaneness is infinitely worse than that of a stinking carcase ; and many, who do not use the most horrid oaths, will cry out—O Lord ! O God ! O Christ ! God bless us ! Lord have mercy ! &c. &c. But however common this practice is, let all men know, that God declares "he will not hold them guiltless that take his name in vain." O consider what a great God we have to do with ; and let his name never be mentioned without a serious pause, allowing us time to think who he is, and that he is greatly to be feared.

The *fourth* commandment respects the religious observation of the Lord's Day, or christian Sabbath. We can never enough admire the goodness of God in the appointment of it. Persons should prepare for it, by having every thing in readiness as much as possible, that no part of *it, especially the morning*, which is the best part of it, *should be lost*. All unnecessary works are to be laid

aside : no journeys, no visits, no settling accounts, writing letters, nor paying and receiving wages. The whole day, from morning to night, should be spent in acts of religious worship, public and private, except so much as must be employed in works of necessity and mercy.

O ! how awfully is this holy day profaned by idleness, by needless journeys and visits, by wilfully staying away from public worship, or by persons going to church merely to meet with neighbours for worldly business ; or to shew their new clothes ; by going to public houses, by reading newspapers, or by mere worldly vain discourse and amusement !

Now, the breach of this commandment, and of the three former, evidently proceeds from want of love to God. If we loved him as the best of beings, we should love his day, revere his name, and prize his worship. And have we not broken all these commandments ? Have we not reason to cry, in the words of the Liturgy, " Lord, have mercy upon us, (for having broken these laws) and incline our hearts to keep them in time to come."

Proceed we now to the second table of the law. The six last commandments respect our love to our neighbour. The sum of all is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

The *fifth* commandment respects our nearest neighbour—our relations, our parents. These have the care and expense of education ; we can never repay their kindness. We should honour them by obedience to their directions, and treating them with the greatest respect ; and that not only in childhood, but in youth and riper years ; we should study to preserve their reputation : to alleviate their infirmities ; and, if necessary, to support them in old age.

This command also includes all relative duties, whether to superiors, inferiors, or equals ; it includes the duty that servants owe to their masters, and subjects to their governors ; it forbids mere eye-service ; wasting the property of superiors ; or being unfaithful in what they commit to our trust.

The *sixth* commandment directs us how to shew our love to our neighbour, by a regard to his life and health ; and it forbids not only actual murder, but anger, hatred,

eternity. If you can hear the curses of this law, not be alarmed for your safety, your heart is hard indeed. May God have mercy upon you, and take away the heart of stone!

Perhaps you are saying, must I despair then? God forbid! You must despair of obtaining salvation by your works, your sorrow for sin, or your future amendment. And this will make the gospel welcome to you. The law has done its office, if it drives you to Christ, who is preached for this very purpose, and "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness." The gospel reveals a full, and everlasting salvation. It publishes to the convicted sinner, pardon and life, as the free gift of God for Christ has obeyed the precepts of the law in our stead. He has also borne the punishment in our room. "He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." What a blessing have you already received, if God, by his good Spirit, has convinced you of sin! This is the dawn of a glorious day. He will convince you of righteousness, and shew you that it shall be yours. Cast yourselves down at the footstool of mercy. Confess your sins. Acknowledge your guilt. Own your helplessness. Cry for pardon. Fly to Jesus, who will be gracious, and all shall yet be well. He hath wounded, that he may heal; he hath killed, that he may make alive. You now will be glad of the physician, for feel your sickness; and he waits to be gracious. You are weary and heavy laden, and he will give you rest.

"Go, you that rest upon the law,
And madly seek salvation there,
Look to the flame that Moses saw,
And shrink, and tremble, and despair.

"But I'll retire beneath the cross;
Saviour, at thy dear feet I lie!
And the keen sword that Justice draws,
Flaming and red, shall pass me by."

SERMON IV.

CHRIST, THE END OF THE LAW FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Rom. x. 4. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

THE two principal parts of Scripture, which it concerns us most to know, are the Law and the Gospel. "He who can rightly distinguish between these," says Luther, "is a good divine;" and we may add, that he who knows how to use both aright, in an experimental and practical manner, is a good christian.

The nature and use of the law has been already considered. The proper effect of it is the same in every believer as it was in St. Paul. "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." The person brought into this state will be put on the enquiry—How then can I come before God and hope for pardon? If the law be so holy and strict—if it can do nothing for me, but convince me of sin, and condemn me for it—by what means can I be accepted?

Now there are but two ways that ever were proposed of God, or devised by man: the one, according to the old covenant, Do, and live; the other, according to the new—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Whatever ways and means have been thought of, by people of all religions, they may be reduced to these two—*Works*, or *Grace*. And these cannot be mixed; for if any merit be allowed to works, there is an end to grace; and if salvation be of grace, then there is no place for the merit of works. So St. Paul speaks, Rom. xi. 6. "If by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." So that you see salvation cannot be by grace and works mixed, it must be by one or the other alone, and we are repeatedly assured in the Scripture, that "by grace are we saved, through faith," and "not by works, lest any man should boast," Eph. ii. 8, 9.

great enemy, the devil, came and "found nothing in him;" no sin in his heart; no sin in his life. Thus was he the pure and spotless Lamb of God, prepared to bear away the sin of the world.

But Jesus Christ, who knew no sin, was "*made sin*," that is, by imputation; it was reckoned to him; put to his account; in the same manner as his righteousness is imputed to us, or put to our account. Out of his great love to his people, he became their surety, to answer for their sins, and to bear their punishment. So the prophet Isaiah speaks, chap. liii. 4, &c. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all."

The design of Christ's being made sin for us was, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Righteousness is a perfect conformity to the law of God, without which no man can be saved; for it is written, "*The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God*," 1 Cor. vi. 9. Now we are all unrighteous, because we have broken the law. "There is none righteous" upon earth, in himself: "no, not one." And yet without a righteousness, we cannot be saved. What then can we do? Where can we look? Only to Jesus. "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." "It is not said, in my own works, in my own repentance, no, nor in my own faith, but in the LORD JESUS have I righteousness—righteousness for justification, and strength for sanctification. An imputed righteousness to procure my acceptance; an imparted strength to produce my holiness. *Surely*, which expresses a firm persuasion, and an unshaken affiance." To him give all the prophets witness; for "this righteousness of God without the law, is witnessed by the law and the prophets." Hear what the prophet Daniel says of him, chap. ix. 24—"To finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." All this Christ actually did by his obedience unto death; and thus he became the end of the law, which is the second thing we proposed.

II. Jesus Christ, by his righteousness, is become the end of the law; for

1. **How** by he put an end to the *ceremonial* law, or those ordinances, such as sacrifices, which were types or emblems of him. You may remember, that our Saviour, just before his death, cried out "*It is finished!*"—as if he had said—My engagements with the Father are accomplished—the types and prophecies are fulfilled—my dreadful sufferings are at an end—the ceremonial law is abolished. Thus "the law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ."

2. The *moral* law, or law of the ten commandments, was hereby satisfied and magnified; according to the prophecy, (Is. xlii. 21,) "He will magnify the law and make it honourable." The law must have its end, and be completely fulfilled, or we cannot appear as righteous before God; but we are unable to fulfil it ourselves. What we, however, could not do, He, as our surety, has done. The law demands a righteousness of us; this is the end at which it aims, but we cannot effect it. Christ has done it for us, and is become the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. With this the law is satisfied, and, like the avenger of blood, pursues the sinner only till he takes refuge in Christ; in him the believer finds a sanctuary, and the law retires, satisfied, and well pleased for his righteousness sake.

We have only now to shew, in the

Third place, That this righteousness is given to every believer; or, that it is by faith we become interested therein.

The righteousness wrought out by Jesus is freely given to the believer; so St. Paul says, Rom. v. 16, "The judgment was by one (offence) to condemnation, but *the free gift* is of many offences to justification."

If it be asked, How can the righteousness of another be made ours? We answer, in the same manner that our sins were made Christ's, that is, by imputation. Christ, who had no sin of his own, was made sin for us; reckoned as a sinner, and dealt with as such; so we who have no righteousness of our own, are made the righteousness of God, *in him*—not in ourselves. The sins of the elect were not inherent in Christ, but put to his account; so the *righteousness of Christ* is not inherent in us, but imputed.

to us; and God is graciously pleased to deal with us accordingly: he treats us as if we had not sinned, and accepts us as perfectly righteous, so that there is no condemnation whatever to us.

The nature of this may be learned from the dealings of mankind with one another. We read in St. Paul's Epistle to Philemon, to whom he wrote in behalf of Onesimus, a runaway servant, who was afterwards converted, desiring him to receive him again—"If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, saith Paul, *impute it to me*," put it to my account. And thus it is with bondsmen, or sureties, who make themselves liable to pay the debt of another; what they pay is imputed to the person for whom they are bound, and he is reckoned to have paid it, by them: and thus as a plain man expresses it, "The gospel is nothing but good news—that a rich man is come into the country, to pay poor people's debts."

Now this glorious gift of righteousness becomes our's by faith; it is therefore called "the righteousness of faith;" and "the righteousness of God, which is by faith; and which is to, and upon, all that believe." Hence, also, we are said to be "justified by faith; and to be saved by grace, through faith."

The person who has been convinced of sin by the law, alarmed by his sense of danger, led to seek for salvation, and enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, gladly receives this gift of righteousness. He sees no other way. He is pleased with this way. He receives this righteousness, and relies upon it for his acceptance with God.

We must always remember, that the only person who can or will receive this righteousness, is one who has been convinced that he is unrighteous in himself; and who is looking out for deliverance from that state in which the law leaves him. He hears the proposal of the gospel; assents to it as true; delights in it as good; renounces all other ways of obtaining relief, and heartily consents to be saved by grace alone. This is that faith frequently described in the scripture by receiving Christ—Coming to Christ, and trusting in Christ.

APPLICATION.

And now, my dear friends, consider, I beseech you, the great importance of this subject. That great Reformer, *Luther*, said, that "justification by faith is that article on which the whole church must stand or fall." It was the pillar of the Reformation. It is the leading doctrine of the Church of England. In one of the 39 Articles, which you will do well to read, this grand truth is thus expressed; "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort." The prayer book speaks the same language. Perhaps you may remember these expressions:—"O Lord God, who seest that we put not our trust in any thing that we do." Again, "We lean only on the hope of thy heavenly grace." In another place, "We do not presume to come to this thy table, trusting in our own righteousness."

Take also a few passages from the book of Homilies. "Man cannot make himself righteous by his own works, neither in whole nor in part: for that were the greatest arrogancy and presumption of man that Antichrist could set up against God, to affirm that man might by his own works, take away his sins, and so justify himself." In another place we have these excellent words, "Christ is now become the righteousness of all them that do truly believe in him; He, for them, paid the ransom by his death; He, for them, fulfilled the law in his life." Once more, "This righteousness, which we so receive of God's mercy, and Christ's merits, embraced by faith, is taken, accepted, and allowed of God, our perfect and full justification."

Think of this matter with respect to yourselves.—You must die. You must appear before a holy God, who hates sin, and has declared that the soul that sinneth shall die. Are you not asking,—“Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and appear before the most high God!” You have now heard. Not by works of righteousness which you have done. These are imperfect and insufficient. The best of them is mixed with sin. Trust not to them. *Renounce them all, and say with St. Paul, “Yea, doubt-*

less, and I count all things but dung and dross, that I may win Christ and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God, by faith." If you trust to any thing else, you "frustrate," as much as you can, "the grace of God," and in effect say, that "Christ died in vain." This is a blasphemy that you do not intend, but all self-righteousness speaks this horrid language. Remember what is written, 1 Cor. iii. 11, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." This alone can bear the weight of a sinner's salvation; every other will give way when the storm comes, and bury the builder in its ruins.

But I hope better things of you, my brethren, even the things which accompany salvation. I hope you are convinced of sin, and also of righteousness; that you are hungering and thirsting after it. Be of good comfort. It is the gift of God, freely bestowed, without any deservings on the part of the sinner. "Ask, and ye shall receive. Seek, and ye shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Pray to God for faith. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to produce it. Faith cometh by hearing. Continue to hear his word; and expect, that, in waiting upon God, he will enable you to mix faith with it, that so it may profit your soul.

Have any of you, my brethren, put on the Lord Jesus? Is he the foundation of your hopes? Is his righteousness the rock on which you build? the wedding garment in which you resolve to appear before him? I call upon you to rejoice. Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. Blessed is your heart, for therewith ye have believed unto salvation. Now you may say with the Church, (Is. lxi. 10,) "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness!"—"A robe, that hides every sin, which in thought, word, or deed, I have committed. A robe, which screens from the sword of justice, the curse of the law, and all the vengeance *which my iniquities have deserved.* A robe, which adorns *and dignifies my soul;* renders it fair as the moon, clear as *he sun,* and meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

happy Believer! go on thy way rejoicing. The sting of death is gone. Who shall condemn thee? God hath justified thee. Thou knowest in whom thou hast believed; he will assuredly keep that which thou hast committed unto him. Wear this righteousness as thy breast-plate. It shall guard thy heart from fear, in sickness, and in death; thus defended, thou shalt appear with boldness in the presence of God. Filled with holy joy and gratitude, let thy lips and life proclaim the same faith which justifies thee, sanctifies the heart; that this doctrine is according to godliness; and that "the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, teacheth thee to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live righteously, soberly, and godly, in this present evil world." Let the following lines be the sincere language of every soul:

"Be all my heart, and all my ways,
Directed to thy single praise;
And let my glad obedience prove
How much I owe, how much I love."

The LAW and GOSPEL distinguished.

The Law commands, and makes us know,
What duties to our God we owe;
But 'tis the Gospel must reveal
Where lies our strength to do his will.
The law discovers guilt and sin,
And shews how vile our hearts have been;
Only the Gospel can express
Forgiving love, and cleansing grace.
What curses doth the Law denounce
Against the man that fails but once!
But in the Gospel Christ appears,
Pard'ning the guilt of num'rous years.
My soul, no more attempt to draw
Thy life and comfort from the law:
Fly to the hope the Gospel gives:
The man that trusts the promise lives.

WATTS.

SERMON V.

THE FALL OF MAN.

EccI. vii. 29.—God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

THESE are the words of Solomon, the King of Israel; and appear to be the result of much observation and experience. Possessed of superior talents, and placed in the highest station, he resolved to attain the utmost degree of wisdom; but his success was not equal to his wishes. He perceived however, the extreme folly of having so many wives and concubines; and says, verse 28,—“ One man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found;” that is, among his courtiers and flatterers, one man, perhaps among a thousand, he found, on whom he could depend; but not one among his thousand wives and concubines. “ But this only, saith he, have I found—that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.” This he was sure of. He had no doubt respecting this; and to this apostacy of man he traces up the evils he saw and felt.

These words represent two things—namely,

The original and apostate state of man.

First, let us consider the *original* state of man. “God. made man upright.”

Man signifies the first man Adam; the father and head of all men; in whom the whole human race was included. God *made* him: formed him out of the dust of the earth; and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, Gen. ii. 7. God made him *upright*; this does not mean in his bodily stature, but in the frame and disposition of his mind. “ God created man in his own image, in his own likeness.” He was naturally and habitually righteous. His heart was properly disposed towards God; with a love of good, and a hatred of evil. The law was not written for him in tables of stone, but it was written upon his heart.

His *mind* was endued with true knowledge, (Col. iii. 2.) *He knew* his maker. He knew his glorious *perfections*; his *power*, his *wisdom*, his *holiness*, and his *goodness*. *He knew* his relation to God, his duty to him, and

his dependance on him. He saw the glory and goodness of God in his works. He studied them, that he might glorify God in them; hence we find him giving names to the creatures, which in the original, shew that he had observed them, and understood their nature.

His *will* was conformed to the will of God. It had no such bias to evil as we now have; but it was disposed to comply with the divine will in all respects.

The *affections* of his soul were holy and heavenly. He loved God above all. He considered him as the supreme good, and the grand source of his happiness. He loved the creatures for God's sake; and all the beauty or sweetness he found in them, led him to adore and love his God the more.

In this state, man was truly blessed and honourable. His mind was calm. His conscience was easy. He knew no guilt. He felt no shame. He was a stranger to fear. No angry passions disturbed his soul. His body was free from disease and pain. He conversed with God, and was as happy as Paradise could make him.

Had he continued in his state of uprightness for a certain time, he would probably, have been translated, without pain or death, to a heavenly state, still happier; and all his posterity would have been confirmed in the same condition of holiness and happiness, without the danger of falling, as he did: for as it is certain, that all mankind, descended from Adam, are involved in the consequences of his fall; we may justly conclude, that had he maintained his integrity, they would all have shared in the happy fruit of it. But, alas! though "God made man upright, he hath sought out many inventions." "The crown is fallen from his head, the glory is departed from him." This is a point which it greatly concerns us to know. This is one of the first principles of our religion, on which all the rest depend. "For if man is not at *variance* with his Creator, what need of a *Mediator*? If he be not *depraved* and *undone*, what necessity of a *Restorer* and *Saviour*? If he is not *enslaved* to sin, why is he *redeemed* by Jesus Christ? If he is not *polluted*, why must he be *washed* in the blood of the *Lamb*? If his soul is not *disordered*, what occasion is there for a *divine Physician*? In a word, if he is not born in

sin, why is a *new birth* so necessary, that Christ solemnly declares, without it no man can “see the kingdom of God?”—Let us then attend, in the second place, to

The present apostate state of man.

Satan, full of hatred to God, and envying the happiness of man, devised the method of his destruction with infernal cunning. He assaulted “the weaker vessel” first questioned, and then denied the word of God; represented the command not to eat of the tree as very severe and the eating of it as quite harmless, yea, as highly advantageous. “Ye shall not surely die,” said the devil though God had said, “Ye shall surely die.” Thus Eve was deceived, and became the unhappy means of seducing her husband. Thus both our first parents fell from their original state of purity and bliss; and, as a token of God’s dreadful displeasure, were banished from the garden of Eden.

But you must observe, that in and by this fall of our first parents, all their posterity likewise fell. So, St. Paul assures us, Rom. v. 12. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:” And again, verse 15 “through the offence of one, many are dead;” and again verse 18, “by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation.”

In consequence of our fall in Adam, our nature is wholly corrupt. Our hearts are naturally carnal and worldly. We forsake God, the foundation of happiness; and vainly strive to make ourselves happy in sin and folly; or, as our text has it—“we have sought out many inventions”—many vain reasonings—many foolish questions and speculations! we may read our depravity in our misery. In our present fallen state we can relish only earthly things, and they all conspire to disappoint our expectations. What are the numberless inventions of men, but weak and wicked attempts to procure happiness without God, and contrary to his will. What inventions to please the imaginations! Hence the loads of novels which burden the world, and are *read and relished* far better than the word of truth. What *inventions* to delight the eyes! Hence plays and shows *and all the vanity of dress*. What inventions to please

! Hence all the charms of music, vocal and instrumental. What inventions to gratify the taste? Hence all art of cookery, collecting niceties from every quarter the world. Of how many may it be said, that their hen is their temple, the cook their priest, and their belly their god! What inventions are there to kill time! Short life is, and we all complain it is so short, yet it drags on slowly for many. Hence the various amusements, especially playing at cards, invented on purpose to kill time. how soon will these murderers of time wish for one of their lost hours, when time with them shall be no more! What inventions are they to gratify pride! What contrivances to make us look greater and finer than our neighbours! What inventions to become rich and great! for men spend all their strength, and risk their health and life. What inventions to deceive one another, and to appear what we really are not!

but there are worse inventions still in matters of religion. What inventions of doctrine! how many teach, for the true truth the commandments of men! What inventions in the worship of God! Hence all idolatry and superstition; hateful to God, and hurtful to man. What inventions as to the way of acceptance with God! There is but one true way, and that is Christ; but, instead of this, men have invented a thousand ways; pretending, by their own virtue, goodness, morality, charity, and devotion, to commend themselves to God.

Not to dwell any longer on the word "inventions," let us take a general view of man in his fallen state.

See what ignorance veils his mind! How wretched and degraded to the state of brute beasts are millions of the human race; the Indians of America, and the Blacks of Africa! even in Europe, which is more enlightened; and in England too; a country full of churches and bibles! O

many thousands are in darkness and the shadow of death! Yes, even many of those, who are scholars, are ignorant enough in worldly things, know not God, know not themselves, know not Jesus Christ. How many that seem pious and religious, worship an "unknown God," being ignorant of their fallen state, and therefore ignorant of the salvation of the Redeemer.

But ignorance is not all. Consider the *carnality* of the mind. The heart is gone from God. It does "not like to retain God in its knowledge." How many are saying to God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways:" And say, my brethren, is it not so with some of you? Why else is it that you do not love prayer? Why do you neglect the bible? Why do you break the sabbath? Why do you take pleasure in the company of the wicked, while you laugh at serious people, and true piety? Your conscience sometimes smites you for this, for you know they are right, and you are wrong; and were you on a dying bed, you would gladly be in their state. You have an immortal soul, which you know must be saved for ever, or lost for ever, and yet you live as if you had no soul at all. And though religion be the great business of man, it is the only business that you neglect; it is the only business that you hate to see others mind. And does not this convince you that you are carnal indeed?

"Even a child is known by his doings;" "foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child," Prov. xx. 2. xxii. 15. Have you never observed the envy, pride, and passion of little children? They could not learn these evil tempers from others. They brought them into the world with them. They were born in sin.

Look at young people. The seeds of sin which were in their nature spring up and grow apace. The bud of vice now begins to blow. See the forward, rash youth, full of pride and self-conceit, despising his parents, impatient of controul, bursting every bond, that he may pursue his pleasures; and determined to indulge his lusts, though at the expense of health, character, and life itself. O who can lament, as it deserves, the shameful, the worse than brutal lewdness of both sexes? This vice awfully prevails; and though some may laugh at it, and think it a little sin, let them know, that "whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Heb. xiii. 4.

What shall we say of *profaneness*? "Because of swearing the land mourneth;" England groans under the burden of this horrid crime, this unprofitable vice; the streets, the roads, the fields, the ale-houses, ring with the *horrid language* of hell. The throat of the swearer is

"an open sepulchre," belching forth, in oaths and curses, a stench more hateful to God, than the smell of a human carcase to man. This is so common, that we almost forget its criminality; but what saith the law? "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain." Surely this is a sin, which, above most others, shews that man is woefully fallen and wicked; or how could he practice, how could he love, this unprofitable vice?

Time would fail us to speak of a thousand other evils which proceed out of the heart. Read the catalogue given by our Saviour himself, Mat. xx. 19. "Evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemy; these come forth from the heart, and they defile the man."

The scriptures abound with testimonies to this sad truth. Read the following, Gen. vi. 5, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually; and it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." See also, Gen. viii. 21, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Read also Job xi. 12, "Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt;" and chap. xv. 14. "What is man that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" And lest any should think that all people are not so bad, and that these things are said only of openly wicked persons, observe what the following scripture declares, Psalm xiv. 2, 3, "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They are *all* gone aside; they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good; no, *not one*." In a word, see the true picture of fallen man, in Jerem. xvii. 9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

Thus, then, is this terrible, but useful truth, fully confirmed. None can deny it, without denying the word of God. But if these testimonies are not enough, turn your

eyes to the state of mankind in this present evil world, and you will find sad proof that man is in a fallen state. How astonishing is the quantity of misery in the world ! How many thousands are rending the air with the cry of pain or wretchedness ! Strange, that ever there should be so much ; that there should be any suffering in the creation of a good God ! Doubtless there is a cause for it ; and if the Bible had not told us what it is, we should be forever in the dark. O, Adam, what hast thou done ! O, man, what art thou always doing ! Is not "the earth cursed for man's sake ?" and why doth it bring forth so plentifully thorns and briars, while useful plants, and fruit, and grain, cannot be produced without great labour ? The earth itself preaches to us this humbling doctrine, and while man gains his daily bread by the sweat of his brow, let him learn that sin is the fatal cause.

Sometimes the earth is deluged with dangerous floods ; at other times it is hardened with excessive drought. Dreadful peals of thunder shake the heavens ; fearful flashes of lightning fill the skies. Horrible earthquakes cleave the ground, and open a sudden grave for thousands. Burning mountains belch forth their destructive contents. The seas, raised to fury by stormy winds, bury the poor helpless seamen. Terrible plagues sweep away whole cities in a few days. What is the language of these fearful messengers ? They all unite to say, Man is fallen, and God is angry.

Consider also the sorrows of mothers in bringing forth their offsprings ; the cries, and tears, and pains, and death of little babes. Think of the various fierce and agonizing diseases of mankind. What is the world but a huge hospital ? and where almost the house that there is not one sick ? How many of our poor fellow-creatures are pining in poverty, or racked with pain, or raving with madness ? Turn your eyes to the dying bed of a fellow-mortal. Look at his ghastly countenance. See how he is convulsed ; how he labours for life. At last, with a mournful groan, he bids adieu to this wretched world. Behold the pale and lifeless corpse. In a few days, perhaps in a few hours, it begins to change. Putrefaction seizes it ; and the body, once so dear and pleasant, the parent, the wife, and the

child, must be "buried out of our sight;" must be consigned to the dark, cold, and loathsome grave, to become the prey of sordid worms. What a terrible proof does all this afford of our sinful state!

IMPROVEMENT.

And now what shall we say to these things? Is this the state of man! How necessary is it that he should know it! We observed at the beginning, that it is one of the first principles of our religion, and without knowing this, we cannot understand the rest.—"When the veil is upon the heart, the veil is upon every thing." There are three things, the absolute necessity of which we may learn from what has been said, namely, *Redemption*, *Repentance* and *Regeneration*.

1. *Redemption*. God hates sin with infinite abhorrence. Sin renders us abominable in his sight. "The wages of sin is death." "He will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." How then can we escape the damnation of hell? Blessed be God, he hath so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son to be our Redeemer and Saviour. Jesus Christ has died for sinners, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." By his blood, reconciliation is made for iniquity; and by his Spirit, our nature is renewed; so that we may be fully restored to the favour and image of God. "O Jesus, what hast thou not done to loosen guilt and pain, to sweeten adversity, to blunt the sting of death, to restore happiness, in some degree, to the earth, and to ensure it in eternity."

2. See also the need of *Repentance*, or such a sight and sense of sin as leads to godly sorrow and self-abhorrence. "Sin is the only thing that God hates, and almost the only thing that man loves;" but grace will make us hate it heartily, and ourselves on account of it. Alas, how far from this are many, who yet call themselves christians! Hear the proud Pharisee crying, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are:" or boasting that he has a good heart, and a clear conscience; that he does his duty to the best of his power, and never hurt any body in all his life. *This is the wretched cant of poor deluded souls,*

who know not the "plague of their own hearts." God forbid this should be our case. Let us rather, like the good men we read of in scripture, confess our sins, loathe ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes. Then shall we thankfully receive the free mercy and forgiving love of God through Jesus Christ.

3. From hence also we learn the necessity of *Regeneration*. Nothing short of this is sufficient : for "striving against nature is like holding a weathercock with one's hand ; as soon as the force is taken off, it veers again with the wind." If we are born in sin, we must be born again. So our Saviour solemnly declared to Nicodemus, John iii. 3. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." We must have a new heart ; that is, a new disposition of heart ; such a change within, as may be justly called a new creation. And this is far more than the baptism of water. We must be "born of water and of the Holy Ghost ;" that is, we must experience the power of the Spirit on our minds, which is like that of water on the body, to cleanse and purify it from sin. Water, in baptism, is "the outward visible sign," but there is also "an inward and spiritual grace ;" and this is "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness." The regenerate person hates sin, and earnestly desires deliverance from it. The sincere language of the soul is—"Go, sin ; go, for ever, thou rebel to God ; thou crucifier of Christ ; thou griever of the Spirit ; thou curse of the earth ; thou poison in my blood ; thou plague of my soul, and bane of all my happiness."

How important then is the knowledge of our final state ! "It is the devil's master-piece to make us think well of ourselves." It is God's great and gracious work to discover to us our true condition. May the Holy Spirit so bless what has now been said concerning it, that, discovering the disease of our nature, we may highly prize the great Physician of our souls ; may lie low before a holy God in the dust of humiliation ; yet looking up for pardoning mercy, and for sanctifying grace, daily to renew *us in the spirit* of our mind, till, being made meet for heaven, we are admitted into that blessed state, where sin and

sorrow shall be known no more ; and where, with all the redeemed, we shall celebrate our glorious recovery from the ruins of the fall, ascribing salvation to God and the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON VI.

REDEMPTION.

Eph. 1. 6.—In whom we have Redemption through his blood.

THE word *Redemption*, is perhaps the most comprehensive that our own language, or any other, can afford. Redemption itself is certainly the greatest blessing that God can bestow, or man receive. 'Tis this that strikes the joyful strings of the heavenly harpers'. This is the burden of that ever-new song, which none but the redeemed can sing—"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, for thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue and people, and nation."

The salvation of man, under whatever name it is described, always supposes his fallen, guilty, ruined, and helpless state ; nor can we understand one word of the gospel aright without knowing this. He is dangerously diseased ; Christ is the physician, and salvation his cure. He is naked : Christ covers him with his righteousness. He is famished : Christ is his meat and drink. He is in darkness : Christ is his light. He stands at the bar, accused, and ready to be condemned : Christ appears as his surety, and pleads his righteousness for his justification. So here in the text. Man is in bondage : Christ pays the ransom, and procures his discharge.

Come then, my friends, and let us attend to this great subject ; and remember, that we are fixing our minds on the same delightful theme that engages the hearts and harps of glorified saints ; and which will employ our grateful tongues to all eternity, if we are found among the ransomed of the Lord.

Redemption, among men, is the deliverance of persons out of a state of captivity and bondage by an act of power,

or rather by the payment of a price for their ransom. The recovery of God's chosen people from the ruins of the fall is therefore described by this term ; because they are, by nature, in a wretched state of bondage and slavery, from which they could never deliver themselves ; and in which, if not delivered, they must perish for ever. But Christ, the Son of God, out of his infinite love and compassion, undertook the deliverance : and by paying down a sufficient price, even his own precious blood, as a ransom, delivered them from ruin, and restored them to liberty.

That we may better understand this redemption of lost man, let us consider—*his captivity—his helplessness—and, the means of his deliverance.*

Consider, first, the state of man as a captive and a slave. Captives, among men, are persons taken in war and made prisoners. In many cases they have been used very ill ; put to shame ; doomed to hard labour ; confined in chains, prisons, or mines ; led at the chariot wheels of their conquerors ; and sometimes put to death in a wanton and cruel manner. To this day the poor Blacks are treated as captives, and kept in a state of bondage. Ships are sent from England and other countries to Africa, on purpose to get hundreds and thousands of them for slaves. They are stolen, or procured under various and wicked pretences ; torn from the bosoms of their dearest relations ; forced away from their own country ; closely stowed together in a ship ; and, when brought to the West Indies, sold like beasts in a market. They are then doomed to hard labour, and often to cruel usage, till death puts an end to their miseries, or their liberty is obtained by paying a sum of money for it. In such a case, a man may be said to be redeemed ; and, ceasing to be a slave, he becomes a freeman. This may give us some idea of the nature of Redemption. When God made man, he made him upright ; he made him free ; but he soon lost his liberty. Satan attacked him, and prevailed against him ; and not against him only, but against all his posterity. In this state we are born ; in this we live ; and in this we die and perish, unless the Redemption of Christ is applied to *our souls by the Holy Spirit*. You would pity a number of poor captives, if you saw them in heavy chains ; if you

saw them stript of their clothing, robbed of their wealth, or sold like beasts ; if you saw them cruelly abused and beaten, and pining to death in pain and misery. Well, this is our own state by nature. We are conquered by Satan ; far removed from our original happy condition ; deprived of our true riches, the image and favour of God ; tied and bound with the chains of our sins, basely employed by the devil in the horrid drudgery of our lusts ; and ~~if~~ grace prevent it not, liable to be summoned by death ~~into~~ an awful eternity, to receive the wages of our sin, which is eternal misery.

From this sad condition we cannot deliver ourselves. We have neither the will nor the power. It is the peculiar misery of sinful man, that he knows not his misery. Other captives groan for freedom. Even a bird or a beast, deprived of liberty, struggles to get free ; but more wretched and stupid sinners deny that they are slaves ; and foolishly boast, like the Jews, “ that they were never in bondage to any man.” They hug their yoke ; they love their prison, and fancy music in the rattling of their chains. If any here are in this condition, may God open their eyes, and deliver them from the sad infatuation !

But if a man had a *will* to be free, he has not the *power*. What ransom can he offer ! Can he make satisfaction to the injured law of God ? Can he render back to his Maker the glory of which he has robbed him ? Or can he restore to his own soul the image of God, which is lost and spoiled by sin ? Can he renew his sinful nature to holiness, or make himself a new creature ? No ; it is impossible. If the heart of God do not pity ; if the hand of God do not help ; he must die a slave, and be the eternal companion of his cruel tyrant and fellow-slaves in the prison of hell.

But blessed be God for Jesus Christ ! When there was no eye to pity, no hand to help, his own Almighty arm brought salvation. The Son of God, touched with compassion for perishing man, descended from his throne of Glory, and visited our wretched abode ; and, because those whom he came to redeem were partakers of flesh and blood, “ he also himself took part of the same ; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil ; and deliver them, who, through

fear of death, were all their life time subjected to bondage." Heb. ii. 14, 15.

Among the Jews, the right of redemption belonged to the kinsman. Jesus Christ, in order to redeem us, became a man, the kinsman of our nature, "bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh; for both he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Heb. ii. 11.

The Redemption of captives is usually by paying a price or ransom. This Christ paid, and the price was no less than his blood; so says our text—"In whom we have redemption through his blood." And so St. Paul speaks, Eph. i. 18, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold: but with the precious blood of Christ;"—not by so mean a price as the perishing riches of this world, such as the silver and gold, which are paid for buying poor captives out of bondage, misery, and slavery among men; but it was at no less a price than the noble and invaluable precious blood, sufferings, and death of the Son of God.

Having taken a *general* view of Redemption, let us descend to some particulars, by which we may better understand the subject, and be more affected with it. The natural man is a captive of the *Devil*—of the *Flesh*—of the *World*—of the *Law*, and of the *Grave*. From all these Christ delivers his people.

1. We are all, by nature, captives of the *Devil*. This may seem to you a hard saying, but it is too true; see the proof of it in 2 Tim. ii. 26,—“that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the Devil, who are taken captives by him at his will”—taken alive, as captives of war, to be enslaved and ruined by the Devil. O how dreadful is the power of Satan over wicked men! They are not aware of it, or they would earnestly pray, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,” or the evil one. St. John says, “The whole world lieth in wickedness, or in the wicked one,” 1 John v. 19; and St. Paul says, “He worketh in the children of disobedience,” Eph. ii. 2. So *that there is more truth in some common expressions, used by wicked people, than they are aware of; as when they say, “The Devil is in you.”* It is awfully true of all un-

converted sinners. And it deserves notice, how such people continually sport with such words as these—Hell and hellish—Devil and devilish—Damn and damnation. Surely these words show who is their master ! and what is likely to be their place and portion. May God discover the evil of such things to all who practise them.

Now the blessed Redeemer came down from heaven to destroy the works of the Devil. He overcame all his temptations in the wilderness ; he triumphed over him on the cross ; and when he ascended into heaven, “ he led captivity captive ;” conquered the conqueror, and bound the strong one. He shewed his power over devils, by casting them out of the *bodies* of men ; and he still shews his power, by casting him out of the *souls* of all who believe in him. O that he may show this power among us this moment !

Yes, my friends, if we are redeemed from Satan, we are “ redeemed to *God*”—redeemed to *God*, as his peculiar property ; for his honour and service ; for communion with him now ; and for the everlasting enjoyment of him in glory.

2. We are all, by nature, captives of the *Flesh* ; our minds are fleshly ; “ Sin reigns in our mortal bodies ; we obey it in the lusts thereof ; our members are instruments of unrighteousness ; we have yielded our members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity : for his servants we are to whom we obey,” Rom. vi. 12, &c.

Is not this true, my friends ? Are not some here present yet the slaves of sin ; one of drunkenness ; another of swearing ; another of fornication ; another of lying ; another of thieving, or some other heinous sin ? Ah, Sirs, “ the end of these things is death :”—“ for these things sake cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.” Alas ! how many are strong advocates for human liberty, who are themselves the slaves of corruption ! “ For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage,” 2 Pet. ii. 19.

But adored be Jesus, he came to “ save us from our sins ;” “ that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.” By

the power of his Spirit, the people are "born again," and made "new creatures in Christ Jesus; old things pass away, and all things become new." They are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; they walk not according to the flesh; they are enabled to crucify the old man of sin, and to put on the new man of grace; and to live, in some degree, in that holiness, without which no man can see the Lord. So St. Paul speaks to the converted Romans, "God be thanked, that (*though*) ye were the servants of sin, ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." Rom. vi. 17, 18.

3. We are all, by nature, captives of the *World*: or, as the scripture expresses it—"Walk according to the course of this world," willingly carried along with the stream of sin, and foolishly thinking we shall do well, because we do like others; forgetting that "broad is the road that leadeth to death, and many there be that walk therein;" while the narrow way to life is found by very few. By nature we are conformed to the world; to its foolish customs, maxims, dress and amusements; and also to its dangerous, mistaken notions of religion. People are afraid to think for themselves; they take the religion of their neighbours on trust, without examining, by the word of God, whether it be right or wrong, true or false.

But our blessed Lord "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from the present evil world," from the sins, snares, customs, and fashions of the men of this world. St. Peter speaks of being redeemed from "our vain conversation, received by tradition from our fathers." It matters not what we were brought up to, nor what our forefathers lived in: if it was wrong, we must forsake it. We must confess Christ before men, or he will deny us before angels: and we shall not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, if we know it to be the power of God to our own salvation; but rather glory in the cross of Christ, by which we are crucified to the world, and the world to us. *Then* are we the true disciples of Christ, when we are *not of the world*, even as he was not of the world.

4. We are all, as sinners, captives and prisoners to the broken *Law* and offended *Justice* of God. The law justly demands of us perfect and perpetual obedience. If we fail in one point, we are guilty of all; and fall under its fearful curse. The law demands our obedience, or our blood. If we disobey but once, our lives are forfeited. We are condemned already; and, if death finds us in that state, it shuts us up for ever in hell.

But, glory be to the Lamb of God, that he came into the world to save sinners: and as there could be no remission of sins but by the shedding of blood, he freely gave himself up for us, and died for our sins, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Thus he gave himself a "ransom" for us; and "redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 13. Hereby, all who believe in him are "delivered from the wrath to come." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them." They have passed from death unto life; and "who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." In consequence of this they are entitled to peace of conscience, even the peace of God that passeth all understanding.

Finally, we are all, by reason of sin, doomed to *Death*, and shall shortly be prisoners of the *Grave*. This is the house appointed for all living; to this dark abode we must soon remove, and there remain till the great day, when there shall be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust.

But the glorious Redeemer has said of his people, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction!" Yes, Jesus is made unto us redemption; namely, "the redemption of the body;" and "the creature itself," that is, the body, "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God," Rom. viii. 21. Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

APPLICATION.—And now, my friends, what think you of Redemption? Does it appear to you a little or a great matter? How are your hearts affected with it? Do you know that you are, or once was, in this miserable bondage? You can never desire deliverance, nor love the deliverer, till you know this. When Israel was in Egypt, “they sighed by reason of their bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of their bondage.” Again, when Israel was in Babylon, “they sat down by the rivers and wept! yea, they wept, when they remembered Zion.” Depend upon it, if you never saw this to be your condition, it is your condition now. If you never sought redemption, you never partook of it. If you never saw any excellence and preciousness in Christ, you are yet “in the gall of bitterness, yet in the bond of iniquity.” Be advised, when you go home, to retire to some secret place, and, on your bended knees, implore the blessed Redeemer to set you free. Say, with the Psalmist, “Draw nigh to my soul, and redeem it.” Look through the bars of your prison to heaven. Cry to the Lord in your trouble, and he will save you out of your distresses. Hear him saying, “Wilt thou be made free?” He stands ready to knock off thy fetters, and set thee at liberty. If it was necessary for *you* to pay the price of redemption, you might well despair! but the price is paid; nothing on your part is wanting, but a heart and a hand to receive it. Come then, for all things are ready. “Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy and with him is plenteous redemption,” Ps. cxxx. 7. Here is the sum of the gospel. Here are glad tidings of great joy to souls burdened with sin. Are you afflicted with a sense of your sin and misery? Well, there is hope in Israel concerning this. “Hope in the Lord;” not in yourselves, nor in your own works, but in Jehovah; and your encouragement to do so is—“with him is mercy,”—grace, goodness, bounty. He is, of his own nature, disposed to forgive; and there is this further encouragement—“with him there is plenteous redemption.” Christ has shed his precious blood as the ransom price. The redemption is plenteous. The boundless stores of grace and mercy are fully equal to all your wants. *Hope then in the Lord, and let your expectation be fixed*

in him; for "he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities."

And you, who, through grace, have believed to the saving of your souls, come, and consider the sad state you are in; from which nothing could deliver you but the precious ransom of the Saviour's blood. O see the malignity of sin, in the Redeemer's bloody sweat in the garden, and in his dreadful pains on the cross. O see what sin has done! See and detest the murderer of thy precious Lord. Hate it with a perfect hatred, and resolve to wage eternal war against it.

Come and meditate on the love of Christ, "who loved us, and gave himself for you," and who has, by his Spirit, brought home the Redemption to your heart. There was nothing good in you to engage him to do this; for "while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us." O be thankful for your wonderful deliverance. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever."

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy." Had a generous fellow-creature delivered you from Turkish slavery, or from a Spanish inquisition, how would you express your thanks? "O, Sir, would you say, I am under inexpressible obligations; I have not such another friend in all the world; I shall never forget your kindness while I live." But no earthly friend can redeem your soul from sin and Satan. "O would to God, (said a holy man) I could cause paper and ink to speak the worth and excellency, the high and loud praises of our brother Ransomer! Oh, the Ransomer needs not my report; but if he would vouchsafe to take and use it, I should be happy if I had an errand to this world, but for some few years, to spread proclamations of the glory of the Ransomer, whose clothes were torn and dyed in blood; if even, after that, my soul and body should return to their original nothing."

Thus, my friends, let us think of Christ: and, thus thinking of him, let us shew our love by keeping his commandments; ever remembering, that "we are not our own, for we are bought with a price; therefore let us glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which are God's." Remember, you are yet in the body, a body of sin and

death: and though, through grace, “you delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man, yet is there another law in your members, warring against the law of your mind.” “Watch against it then, lest at any time it should bring you into captivity of the law of sin.” Stand fast therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free; and rejoice in hope of the complete, everlasting, and glorious liberty of the children of God in a better world

SERMON VII.

REGENERATION, OR THE NEW BIRTH.

John iii. 3. Jesus answered, and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a Man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.

THE two grand truths of the Christian religion are our ruin in Adam, and our recovery in Christ: and till we know both these, we can perform no duty, nor enjoy any privilege aright; we can neither serve God here nor enter into his glory hereafter.

You must have observed, that the Scripture always divides mankind into two classes—the wicked and the righteous; sinners and saints; believers and unbelievers heirs of hell and heirs of heaven. These are all mixed together on earth, but they will be separated at the day of judgment; and their eternal state will then be fixed according to what was their true character here. What then can be of greater importance to us, than to know our real state at present? And observe, that though there is that difference between men, which was just mentioned we are all by nature in one and the same condition: that is, sinners and children of wrath. So that, unless a change passes upon us, we continue in it, live and die in it, and are lost for ever.

This is the solemn truth, which Jesus Christ in our text declared to Nicodemus. Perhaps you may like to know who he was, and how Christ came to say this to him. I will tell you. Nicodemus was a great man among the Jews. He was a teacher, and a ruler; and having heard that Jesus Christ had said and done many wonderful things, he came to him one night, being ashamed to con-

by day light, and said, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God." Jesus Christ directly begins to teach Nicodemus ; and he begins with the most important truth that was ever taught.—The necessity of the new birth, which he asserts in the strongest manner possible ; "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." As if he had said, I, who am the truth itself, assure you, that no man, considering his fallen and corrupt nature, can understand, or enjoy the blessings of that kingdom of grace which I am come to set up ; nor can he enter the kingdom of glory to which it leads, unless his heart is changed by power from above.

It seems that Nicodemus did not, at first, rightly understand what our Lord meant by this ; and he asked how it could be. But our Lord insists upon it again and again, and we doubt not that Nicodemus came to understand it at last, and really to become a new creature. The Lord grant that we also may become new creatures, so as to serve him here, and enjoy him hereafter !

The *new birth* signifies a *great change*, made in the heart of a sinner by the power of the Holy Spirit. It means that something is done in us, and for us, which we cannot do for ourselves ; something, to which we were before strangers ; something, whereby we begin to live, as we did not live before ; yea, something, whereby such a life begins as shall last for ever ; for, as by our first birth we are born to die, so, by our second birth, we are born to live for ever.

That we may better understand the new birth, or this change of heart, let us more particularly consider,

I. The *nature* of this change ; and,

II. The *necessity* of it.

I. Let us consider the *nature* of this change. "It is not a change of the substance and faculties of the soul. Sin did not destroy the essence of the soul, but its rectitude ; so grace does not give a new faculty, but a new quality. It is not destroying the metal, but the old stamp upon it, to imprint a new one. It is not breaking the candlestick, but putting a *new light* in it. It is a new stringing the *instrument, to make new harmony.*"

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It is a *great* change : or else such a term, as "the new birth;" or, "a new creation;" or, "resurrection;" would not be proper. When a child is born, its way of existing, and of getting nourishment, is quite different from what it was before : so by the new birth, we live in a very different manner. The greatness of this change is elsewhere described by "passing from darkness to light;" yea, by "passing from death to life." "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." It makes a man quite the contrary to what he was before; a contrary as East to West; North to South; light to darkness; flesh to spirit. It is such a change, as if a Black moor should become white; or a lion become a lamb. In a word, God takes away the heart of stone, and gives a heart of flesh.

It is an *universal* change—"a new creature;" a complete creature; not a monster, with some human parts and others wanting. It is *God's* work, and therefore perfect in its parts; though there is room for growth in every part, as in a new born child. O, let us not deceive ourselves with a *partial* change; such as taking up some new opinion, or joining a new sect; or leaving off some old sins, or performing some moral or religious duties. The common changes of age and life may occasion some partial alterations; but this is a change of *the whole man*. In the *understanding* there is light instead of darkness. In the *will* there is softness instead of hardness. In the *affections* there is love instead of enmity.

It is an *inward* change. It will indeed produce an outward change, if the life was before immoral; but there may be strict morality without this inward change. Reformation is not Regeneration, though too often mistaken for it. It is a change of *heart*. We must be "renewed in the spirit of our mind," Eph. iv. 23. "Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looketh at the heart. God has promised to give his people "a new heart;" as the penitent Psalmist prays for it—"Create in me a clean heart, O God! and renew a right spirit within me." Without this there is no true change. "The spring and wheel of a clock must be mended, before the hand of the dial will stand right. It may stand right twice in the day, w

the time of the day comes to it, but not from any motion or rectitude in itself. So a man may seem by one or two actions to be a changed man; but the inward spring being amiss, it is but a deceit." There is a great difference between virtue and religion; between morality and holiness. Many people abstain from some sins, and perform some duties, for the sake of health, reputation, or profit; but in the new creature there is a change of *principle*. The principle of a new creature is faith: "faith working by love" and this abides. He is not like a clock that is wound up, and goes only while it is acted upon by the weight; but, having the Spirit of God within him, and the life of God in his soul, grace is as "a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."

There is in the new creature a change of the *end* he has in view, as well as the *principle* from which he acts. "The glory of God is the end of the new man: *Self* is the end of the old man." Nothing is a greater evidence of being born again, than to be taken off the old centre of self, and to aim at the glory of God, in every thing; whether we eat or drink; whether we are in private or public; whether we are engaged in religious or in common affairs; to desire and aim sincerely at the glory of God; knowing that "we are not our own, but bought with a price, we are to glorify God with our body, soul, and spirit, all which are his."

That the new birth is such a change as has been described, namely, a *great* change, an *universal* change, and an *inward* change, will still more plainly appear, if you consider the alteration it makes in a person's views and apprehensions. He has new thoughts of *God*, of *himself*, of the *world*, of *eternity*, of *Jesus Christ*, and of all *divine ordinances*.

He has new thoughts of *God*. Before he lived, in a great measure, "without God in the world;" without any true knowledge of God; without any proper regard to God; and was ready to think God "altogether such an one as himself." But now he sees that with God there is "terrible majesty," perfect purity, strict justice, and that he is *indeed* greatly to be feared. Now he knows that *God's eye is always upon him*; and that, if he were to ex-

ter into judgment with him, he could never stand. But he learns also, from the gospel that God in Christ is full of grace and goodness, and love ; so that, " he fears the Lord and his goodness."

The new creature has very different thoughts of *himself*. He once acted as his own master ; followed his own wicked will ; was ready to excuse his worst actions ; thought lightly of his sins ; perhaps gloried in his shame. Now he sees the evil of his former ways ; he mourns sincerely for his sins ; he sees the badness of his heart from whence they flowed ; he ranks himself among the chief of sinners ; he wonders at his former boldness in sin ; and he wonders more at the patience of God, in not cutting him off with some sudden stroke of his judgment. In short, he cries, " Behold I am vile. I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes !"

The new creature has new thoughts of the *world* ; of the *men* of it, and the *things* of it. Once he loved the company of profane and unclean persons ; now he shuns them as he would the plague ; and his language is, " Depart from me, ye wicked men, for I will keep the commandments of my God." Before he hated the very sight of a godly person ; now, his heart unites with those who fear the Lord ; he thinks them " the excellent of the earth," wishing to live and die with them. How different also are his views of the things of the world ! Once they were his only portion. He sighed to be great ; he longed to be rich ; he panted for pleasure. Eating and drinking, cards and plays, music, and dancing, or some other vain amusements, were his dear delight ; and to enjoy these he would sacrifice every thing. Now he sees the vanity of them all. He sees their danger. They had led him to the brink of ruin ; and now he can truly say,

" These pleasures now no longer please,

No more delight afford :

Far from my heart be joys like these,

Now I have known the Lord !"

But O, what new apprehensions has he of *Eternity*. He hardly ever used to think of it ; now it is almost always on *his mind* ; for now he has that faith, which is " the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Now, therefore, he looks not at things that are seen, for he knows they are temporal ; but at the things which are not seen, for they are eternal. He knows that he must live for ever ; either in a glorious heaven, or in a dreadful hell. Compared, therefore, with eternal concerns, all worldly things appear as empty shadows, and he considers every thing below according to the relation it bears to his eternal happiness.

The new creature has also very different thoughts of *Jesus Christ* from what he had before. Once he was without form and comeliness to him ; now he appears " the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." He did not wish to hear of him, or read of him, or speak of him, except to profane his name : now he can never hear enough of him ; for he sees, that if ever he is saved, he owes it all to Jesus ; and therefore " counts all things but loss, that he may know him, and win him, and be found in him."

He also thinks very differently of *religious ordinances*. He could not bear to keep the sabbath holy. Either he wholly neglected public worship, and took his carnal pleasure ; or if he came, it was a burden : he did not join in prayer ; singing, at best, was an amusement ; he disregarded the word preached, perhaps derided it ; and as for private prayer, he hated it. How great the change ! Now the Sabbath is his delight, " the holy of the Lord and honourable." The house of God is his home ; the word of God his food ; the Bible his dear companion ; and prayer the breath of his soul.

Thus you see what a change has taken place in his *views* ; and, if time permitted, we might show that these *new views* are attended with *new affections* ; he loves what before he hated ; he hates what before he loved. He has new desires, new fears, new joys, and new sorrows. He makes new resolutions. He is employed in new labours. He has new entertainments. He has new hopes and prospects. How justly then is he called a new creature !

Having briefly shewn the *nature* of regeneration, let us consider,

II. The necessity of it. Observe how very strongly our Lord asserts in the text—" Verily, verily, I say unto thee,

except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Surely, these words must have great weight with us, if we believe the God of truth. But you will ask, What is meant by the kingdom of God? I answer, it means the kingdom of grace upon earth, and the kingdom of glory in heaven. Now, without the new birth, no person whatever can see the kingdom of God. It is not said, *he may not*, or *he shall not*, but *he cannot*; it is impossible in the nature of things.

With respect to the gospel state here, in which Christ reigns, no man can be a *true Christian*, unless he is born again; he cannot be a true member of the church of Christ, or of that society which is governed by Christ; he cannot perform any of the duties required in this kingdom; nor can he enjoy any of the privileges bestowed in it.

He cannot perform any of the *duties*. Fallen man is ignorant of what is truly good. "He calls evil good, and good evil." He is, "to every good work, reprobate," Tit. i. 16. And he has a dislike to that which is good. "The carnal mind is enmity against God," and shews its enmity by rebellion against the law of God, Rom. viii. 7. Now, remaining in this state, he cannot answer the end of his being, which is to glorify God; and having this unfitness and unwillingness to answer that end, there is an absolute, an universal necessity for this change. It is "in Christ Jesus we are created to good works." We cannot "pray in the Spirit," till we are "born of the Spirit;" we cannot "sing with grace in our hearts," till we have grace; "we cannot worship God in the spirit," while we are in the flesh. A dead sinner cannot present "a living sacrifice." The duties of a natural man are lifeless and selfish; "he cannot serve God spiritually," because he is carnal; nor graciously, for he is corrupt; nor vitally, because he is dead; nor freely, for he is enmity against God; nor delightfully, for his heart is alienated; nor sincerely, for his heart is deceit; nor acceptably, "for he that is in the flesh cannot please God."

In like manner, the unregenerate person cannot enjoy *any of the blessed privileges* of the gospel state. He knows *nothing of the joys of salvation*. He is a stranger to the *peace of the gospel*. He has no relish for the sincere milk *of the word*. He cannot delight in prayer; nor enjo

communion with God, or communion with the saints, for things that are not natural can never be delightful. And this also makes it plain, that

The unrenewed man cannot see the kingdom of *glory*. The new birth does not indeed entitle a person to heaven ; but it makes him “ meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.” The unrenewed sinner is shut out from heaven by the unalterable determination of God himself, who has declared, that “ nothing which defileth ” shall enter that place, and that “ without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”

And if you consider what the joys and employments of heaven are, and what the disposition of a sinner is, it will plainly appear that he cannot see the kingdom of God. “ The happiness of heaven is holiness ; and to talk of being happy without it, is as great nonsense, as to talk of being well without health, or being saved without salvation.” People are ready to think, if they go to heaven they must be happy ; but, without a new nature, a man might be as much out of his element in heaven, as a fish, out of the bottom of the sea, would be in a green meadow, or an ox in the bottom of the sea. Can a wicked man who now hates the godly, expect to be happy among none but saints ? Can he, who cannot keep three hours of the sabbath holy, bear to keep an eternal sabbath ? Can he, who now curses and swears, imagine that his tongue shall be for ever employed in praising God ? Can he, who now hates to think of God, love to employ his mind in the eternal contemplation of him ? No, no. Hell is the sinner’s “ own place ; ” there he will have his own company, and, in some measure his old employments, though without the pleasure of them ; but as to heaven, he can never see it till he be born again.

APPLICATION.—From what was first said of the nature of the new birth, let us learn to avoid the common mistake, that baptism is regeneration. It is the sign of it, but not the thing itself. We must “ be born of water and of the Spirit,” John iii. 5 ; that is, of the Holy Spirit, whose grace is, to the soul, what water is to the body. Take not the shadow for the substance. Can baptism change the heart ? Has it changed yours ? Say, poor

sinner, how is it with you? Conscience will tell you, "Old things are not passed away; all things are not become new." Do any of you live in drunkenness, profaneness, sabbath-breaking, whoredom, or any other sin? Or do you live unconcerned about your soul, careless about salvation, without Christ, without prayer? know for certain, that you are yet a stranger to this great and blessed change. And yet, without it, the God of truth assures you, it is impossible for you to be saved. You must be born again. Do not think that outward reformation, or morality, or religious professions, or religious duties, are sufficient. All these are far short of this inward spiritual change. You must be born again. As sure as there is a God in heaven, you must be born again, or you can never go to heaven. And can you bear the thought of being shut out? Put the question to yourself. "Can I dwell with everlasting burnings? Can I endure eternal darkness? Can I bear to be eternally separated from the blessed God? Is my present sinful, sensual life to be preferred before eternal joys? Is there one text in the Bible to give me comfort in this state?" O that you may be so deeply convinced of the immediate necessity of this change, that you may, ere you sleep this night, fall down on your knees before God, and earnestly desire him to make you a new creature. He can do it in a moment; and he has promised his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Say not, as the foolish do, I will not change my religion. Let me ask you a question, Has your religion changed you? If not, it is high time to change it. But do not be deceived by appearances, forms, and names. True religion is not the business of the lip, or the knee, but of the heart. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink," or outward ceremonies; no; but it is within; it consists "in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Be advised also to read and hear his word, for this is the instrument which God employs in effecting this great change. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

And as for you, who have experienced this blessed change, forget not to give the glory to God, and to take the comfort of it to yourselves. Are you born of God? then heaven is yours. The righteousness of Christ is your

title to it, but herein is your *fitness* for it. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God: it follows, therefore, that if he be born again, he shall see it.—Thank God for it. You are renewed for this very purpose, that you should shew forth his praise. God has made you to differ from the mass of mankind. He has done more for you, than if he had made you kings and emperors; for he has made you sons of God and heirs of glory; “heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.” Often reflect on your former state; and admire the grace that has made the difference. God has given you his Spirit, and, in him, a sure earnest of your heavenly inheritance. “He that wrought for you the self-same thing is God.” O, be concerned to live and walk as renewed persons; so shall you prove the reality of the change; adorn the gospel, edify your neighbour, and glorify God.

SERMON VIII.

REPENTANCE.

Mark vi. 12. And they went out, and preached that men should repent.

IT is remarkable, that whatever different notions men have of religion, they all believe that repentance is necessary to salvation. But it may be feared, that many mistake its true nature, and take the shadow for the substance. There are also many, who, though they think it necessary, delay their repentance to some future period; and more than a few die without it, and perish in their sins. It is therefore of great importance, that we should know wherein *true repentance* consists; and that we should be urged ourselves to repent, that we perish not. *That* repentance, then, which is true and genuine, and “needeth not to be repented of,” will be found to include the four following things:

- I. Conviction of sin.
- II. Contrition for sin.
- III. Confession of sin.
- IV. Conversion from sin.

I. *The first thing that belongs to true repentance is a conviction of sin, or a clear sight and feeling sense of our*

sinfulness ; without this, there is no repentance, no religion ; for the gospel may be justly called "the religion of a sinner ;" none but sinners can need mercy or repentance ; and Jesus Christ expressly declares, "that he came not to call the righteous," that is such as the Pharisees, who *thought* themselves righteous, "but sinners to repentance." Now all men are sinners ; not the most profane and openly wicked only, but the most moral, religious, and blameless people among us ; for "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

The word repentance signifies *a change of mind, or afterthought* ; a great change in the mind and disposition of a person, especially about himself, as a sinner. For this purpose the Holy Spirit opens his eyes to see the holy law of God, as contained in the Ten Commandments. This law requires of every person love to God, and love to man. It requires us to love God supremely, and our neighbours as ourselves. It requires perfect, constant, unsinning obedience, all our lives long. It does not demand only sincere obedience, doing as well as we can, but doing all, and doing it always ; so that if a man fail only in one point, he is thereby made a sinner ; the law is broken ; the curse follows ; and if he be not pardoned through the blood of Christ, hell must be his portion.

In general, the repenting sinner is first alarmed on account of some great and open sin, if he has committed such : as the woman of Samaria, when Christ charged her with adultery ; or as Paul was, when convinced of his murderous persecution of the saints. But conviction will not stop here ; it will trace the streams of sin to the spring, namely, that corrupt nature we brought into the world with us. We shall freely confess with David, that "we were born in sin, and in iniquity did our mothers conceive us," Psalm. li. 5. We shall acknowledge with Paul, that "in us, that is, in our flesh," our corrupt nature, "there is no good thing ;" but that "every imagination of the thought of our hearts is only evil continually," Gen. vi. 5. The penitent will readily own he has been a rebel against God all his life ; that he has indeed "left undone those things which he ought to have done ; and done those things which he ought not to have done."

law of God is spiritual; it reaches to the most thoughts, desires, wishes, and purposes of the mind. It rebukes and condemns the sins of the heart, as well as of the lip and the life. A convicted sinner is sensible of many sins, thousands and millions of them. He sees that his best duties and services are mingled with sin; that his prayers, and all his religious exercises, are polluted. He sees that he has, all his life, lived without God in the world, and paid no regard to his will and glory; that he has deceived himself, the world, and the creature, far more than God; and that he has been doing all this contrary to the light and knowledge; notwithstanding the checks of his conscience, and many resolutions to the contrary, and notwithstanding the mercies and the judgments which God sent to reclaim him. Wherever there is this conviction it will be accompanied with contrition.

Contrition, or a *genuine sorrow for sin*, and pain, arises on account of it. This is that "soft heart," or "heart of flesh," which God has promised to give his people; instead of that "heart of stone, with which we are born, and which has no spiritual feeling."

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Psalm 51. Men despise broken things. So the Pharisee despised the broken hearted publican in the temple; but God did not despise him. So far from it, that he accounts the lowliness and shame of a penitent sinner more valuable than the most costly sacrifices of rams and bullocks. A heart that trembles at the word of God; a heart breaking, not in air, but in humiliation; a heart breaking with it, and breaking away from sin. So Peter, when duly convicted with the sin of denying his master, "went out and wept bitterly;" and Mary Magdalene, sensible of her iniquities, "washed her Saviour's feet with her tears."

There is indeed a *false sorrow*, which many mistake for true. When a person is sick, and fears he shall die, it is not uncommon to hear him say he is sorry for sin; and if God will spare his life, he will amend his ways. But often, such an one is only sorry that God is so holy, that the law is so strict, and that he is in danger of being punished for his sins. He is not grieved that he has offended

God, his best friend and benefactor, who has followed him with goodness and mercy all his life. But the rottenness of this repentance often appears when the sick person recovers ; when the fright is over, he returns to the same carnal course as before. The sorrow is no better than that of some criminals at the gallows ; very sorry they are that they have forfeited their lives ; but they are not affected with the criminality of their actions. Felix trembled, but did not repent ; and Judas was sorry for what he had done, but not in a godly manner. And this shews how very uncertain, for the most part, is the repentance of a dying bed. God forbid we should delay our repentance to that season !

But the sorrow of a true penitent is for *sin*, as committed against a holy and good God. Such was the penitence of David, who says, Psalm li. 4, " Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." It is true that he had sinned against his fellow-creatures ; against Uriah, and Bathsheba, and Joab, and all Israel : doubtless he lamented this ; but what cut him to the heart, was his sin against God ; *that* God who had raised him from the sheep-fold to the throne ; who had saved him from the hand of Saul, and given him his master's house ; and if that had been too little, would have given him more ; (for thus Nathan the prophet aggravated his sin.) " Against thee, O Lord," said this broken hearted penitent, " against thee have I sinned." Thus " the goodness of God led him to repentance." Observe, likewise, the tone of the returning prodigal. " I will arise, and go to my father, and say, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." He might have said, Sir, I have spent my fortune, hurt my health, become a beggar, and am ready to starve ; be pleased to relieve me. No ; his heart was affected with his sin and his folly. So it is with a repenting sinner. He considers the majesty of that holy being he has offended ; the reasonableness of his command, the obligations he has broken through, and especially the base ingratitude of his conduct. Then he will feel the force of those affecting words, Is. i. 2, 3 ! " *Hear, O heavens, and give ear O earth, for the Lord hath spoken ; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his*

owner, and the ass his master's crib ; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

The goodness of God to a sinner, in the way of providence, may well excite this godly sorrow ; but, how much more the consideration of redeeming love ! What ! did God " so love the world of rebel men as to send them his only begotten Son ! " And did he send his Son, " not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." O love beyond degree, beyond example, beyond expression !

Let the penitent also remember Jesus ; the innocent, the amiable, the benevolent Jesus. Jesus, who left his throne of glory, and became a poor and afflicted man. Why was he despised and rejected of men ? Why a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ? Why had he not a place where to lay his blessed head ? Why did he endure the contradiction of sinners ? Why was he oppressed and afflicted ? Why was the visage so marred more than any man, and his form than the sons of men ? I know the reason, may the weeping penitent say, " Surely he hath borne my griefs, and carried my sorrows : he was wounded for my transgressions, and bruised for my iniquities."

" 'Twere you, my sins, my cruel sins,

His chief tormentors were ;

Each of my crimes became a nail,

And unbelief the spear.

" 'Twere you that pull'd the vengeance down,

Upon his guiltless head ;

Break, break, my heart, O burst mine eyes,

And let my sorrows bleed."

III. *Confession of sin* will also be made by the true penitent. By nature we are rather disposed to conceal, deny, and excuse our sins ; to say we are no worse than others ; that we could not help committing them ; and that we see no great harm in them. But it is not so, where true repentance is found. We shall take the advice that Joshua gave to Achan. " My son, give glory to the Lord, and make confession to him." To hide or deny our sin, is to dishonour God ; as if he did not see, or would not punish it ; but to confess our sins, is to honour his holy law, which *we have broken* ; to honour his omniscience, which *beheld all our crimes* ; to honour his justice, which *might take*

If it could be proved, that we never committed but one single sin, repentance would be absolutely necessary. One theft, one murder, proved against a man at a human bar is enough to procure his condemnation ; so one sin against God is enough to condemn us to eternal misery. But it is not one, it is not ten thousand sins only, that we have to lament ; “ who can understand his errors ? ” Listen not to the father of lies ; he promised Eve, that eating of the forbidden fruit should do her no harm ; but she found, and we all find, the dreadful effects of that first sin. Say not, with the wicked man of old, “ Who, when he heareth the words of this curse, shall bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst.” God forbid ; for, mark the consequence,—“ The Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against the man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him.” Deut. xxix. 19. Repent, or perish, is the solemn decision of God. “ He commandeth all men, every where, to repent ; and what can be more reasonable ? The law which we have broken is “ holy, just and good.” To love him was our most reasonable service ; and would have been for our unspeakable benefit. Having then broken it, and by so doing incurred his wrath, and exposed ourselves to ruin, can it be thought unreasonable that we should make an humble submission, and implore his mercy ?

Come, then, and be encouraged to instant repentance. He might have cut you off in your sins, without a moment’s warning : but he has given you time and space for repentance. His very command is encouragement. It implies, that “ there is forgiveness with him ; ” for pardon of sin and repentance are inseparably connected. “ Christ is exalted, to give repentance and remission of sins.” “ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” Only do not suppose that repentance deserves or merits pardon. Salvation is all of grace ; but *this is the order appointed of God ; for by penitential sorrow, the heart is prepared to receive the mercy of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Let the "goodness of God lead thee to repentance." He delighteth not in the death of a sinner, but rather rejoiceth in his return. And our Saviour assures us, that "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance." Arise, sinner, for he calleth thee. Does your heart begin to relent? Are you saying, "I will arise and go to my father?" Arise, then, and go at once. He will see thee afar off, and run to meet thee; he waits to be gracious, and there shall be joy in heaven, and joy on earth, upon thy return.

Thousands as vile and base as you have found mercy. Let not Satan say it is too late; the door is open: nor let him say it is too soon. He may say, to-morrow will do. God says, to-day, "While it is called to-day;" then hear his voice. To-morrow may be too late. "This night may thy soul be required of thee." Beware of deferring repentance to a dying bed. Will you not then have enough to do, to bear with patience the pain and agonies of dissolving nature? Why should you plant thorns in your dying pillow? Why should you not then have the peace of God and the joy of the Holy Ghost, to support and comfort your heart? Who can tell but sudden death may be your lot; if not, extreme pain, or a disordered head, may prevent the possibility of repentance. And do not imagine that repentance has any thing in it forbidding. Christ has said, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." The penitent has more pleasure in his tears, than the worldling in all his gaiety. Besides, if the door be strait, it opens into boundless pleasures. Pleasures not confined to time, but which will last to all eternity. God now dwells in the contrite heart; and soon shall every true penitent dwell with him in paradise.

Let those, who know what true repentance is, give thanks to him who has graciously bestowed it. Know, my friends, that repentance is not the work of a day, but of life. The more you know of your own heart, and the more you know of Christ, the more need you will feel of a repenting spirit. "Walk humbly with thy God;" and let the remembrance of forgiven sins keep you low in your own eyes; having received mercy, love much, for much

is forgiven : and labour daily to maintain a conscience void of offence toward God and toward all men.

“O, how I hate those lusts of mine,
That crucifi'd my God ;
Those sins that pierc'd and nail'd his flesh
Fast to the fatal wood !

“Whilst, with a melting broken heart,
My murder'd Lord I view,
I'll raise revenge against my sins,
And slay the murd'ers too.”

SERMON IX.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:

Rom. viii. 9. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

NOTWITHSTANDING the various distinctions which subsist among men, there are but two of any real consequence in the sight of God ; and these are mentioned by St. Paul just before our text—“They that are after the flesh, and mind the things of the flesh ; and they that are after the Spirit, and who mind the things of the Spirit,” ver. 5 ; that is those people, who, remaining in the state they were born, do habitually consult and relish, pursue and delight in worldly, sensual, and sinful things ; or, on the contrary, those who, being born again of the Spirit, are under his guidance and influence ; and therefore pursue, regard, and love things that are of a spiritual and heavenly nature. Every person here belongs to one of these classes ; and it behoves us seriously to examine to which of them ; for on this depends our eternal all. He who is after the flesh “cannot please God,” v. 8 ; but is in a state of death, v. 6 ; or, as it is in the text, “is none of Christ’s,” that is, not a member of his body, not a child in his family, not a subject of his kingdom ; and dying in this state, Christ will not own him for his, nor adjudge him to eternal life at the great day. But if, by the grace of God, we have the Holy Spirit, and live under his gracious influences, it is a proof that we belong to Christ, and shall obtain eternal glory with him. How necessary is it then that we should be able to decide with certainty on this

great question, and to know whether we belong to Christ or not! That we may be able to do this, let us pray to God to assist us while we,

I. Consider who the Spirit of Christ is.

II. Prove that all real Christians have the Spirit of Christ, and shew for what purposes; and,

III. Point out the evidence of our state arising from thence.

I. Let us Consider who the Spirit of Christ is.

The whole Scripture declares that "there is but one only living and true God;" but the Scripture clearly shews, that in the unity of the Godhead there are three (whom we call persons :) thus, in 1 John v. 7, "There are three that bear record in heaven; the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." They are generally called by the names, Father, Son and Holy Ghost; which names are not intended to describe their manner of subsistence among themselves, (for that is a branch of knowledge above our capacity, and is not revealed;) but the manner of their operations in the covenant of grace. To each of these divine persons particular attributes and works are ascribed, and each of them is expressly called God. The divine person we now speak of is the Holy Spirit; called, in the same verse with our text, "the Spirit of God." That he is properly called a *Person*, appears from the personal properties and works ascribed to him. He is said to have *Understanding*, or *Wisdom*, 1 Cor. ii. 10. Is. ii. 3. He is said to have a *Will*, 1 Cor. xii. 11. He is possessed of *Power*, Job xxxii. 4. He is said to *teach us*, John xiv. 26. 1 John ii. 27. to *lead*—to *guide*—to *convince*—to *renew*—to *speak*—to *shew*—to *call*—and *send* ministers. This plainly proves that he is a person, and not merely a quality or property of Deity, as some have vainly pretended.

It is equally evident that he is a *Divine Person*, or truly and properly God, equal with the Father and the Son; for divine perfections are ascribed to him, as *Eternity*—*Omnipresence*—or being every where; and *Omniscience*, or knowing all things. The Holy Spirit is expressly called God. Ananias is said to lie to the Holy Ghost, Acts v. 3; and in the next verse St. Peter says to him, "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." The same person is

intended in both verses, which plainly shews that the Holy Ghost is God. This also appears from the *sin* against the Holy Ghost; if he were not God, would blaspheming him be a sin, an unpardonable sin? But above all, consider the form of baptism. Our Lord commands his apostles to "disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." So likewise in the usual form of benediction: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you." In both these cases, the very same honours are ascribed to the Spirit as are given to the other divine persons; which would be blasphemy, if he were not a divine person, or truly and properly God.

He is called in our text the *Spirit of Christ*, not only because he *proceeded* from Christ, as well as from the Father, but because he was *promised* by Christ, and *sent* by Christ. He was the Spirit of Christ in all the ancient prophets; and he now "testifies of Christ," "takes the things of Christ, and shews them unto us;" in a word, because the whole salvation of Christ is applied to the heart by his sacred influences. We are now, in the second place, to

II. Prove that all real Christians have the Spirit of Christ, and to shew for what purposes they have him. So necessary is this to salvation, that St. Paul declares in our text, that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" that is, he is no Christian.

It is one of the most dangerous errors of this day, to maintain that the influences of the Spirit are not now to be expected, and that they were confined to the days of the apostles, when they had power to work miracles. In consequence of this wicked notion, all that is said of Conversion, Regeneration, and Consolation, is out of date; and poor ignorant souls are lulled asleep in carnal security, contentedly resting in the form of godliness without the power; while they are taught, by their blind leaders, to call all true, vital, and felt religion, nonsense and enthusiasm.

That any of the clergy of the Church of England, should thus deny the work of the Spirit, is extremely absurd and inconsistent, because that church strongly maintains the necessity of it in many parts of the Common Prayer Book. In the collects you may recollect these Petitions

"Grant unto us, thy humble servants, that by thy holy inspiration we may think those things that be good." In another place. "Send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity." In the Communion service she prays, "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit." Observe also the prayer for the King; "Replenish him with the grace of thy Holy Spirit;" and for the Royal Family, "Endue them with thy Holy Spirit." In the XIIIth Article of the Church, it is affirmed, that "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, are not pleasant to God." Every clergyman, at his ordination, is asked by the Bishop this question: "Do you trust that you are moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office?" To which the minister replies, "I trust so." And in the Collect for Whit-Sunday, the Church thus prays—God, who, as at this time, didst teach the hearts of thy faithful people, by sending to them the light of thy Holy Spirit; "*Grant us, by the same Spirit, to have a right judgment in all things; and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort.*" Also in the Collect for the Sunday after Ascension-day, "We beseech thee, leave us not comfortless; but *send to us thy Holy Ghost to comfort us.*" You see then, my brethren, that the Church of England strongly maintains the continuance of the work of the Spirit as necessary to all true ministers and christians. How then do any affirm, that his influences have ceased 1600 years? But as our faith must not rest on the authority of men, let us search the Scriptures, to prove that the work of the Spirit on the heart is absolutely necessary to true godliness.

We freely grant, indeed, that the *extraordinary gifts* of the Holy Ghost were confined to the first ages. Who now pretends to the gift of tongues, or power of working miracles? We do not plead for infallibility, or knowledge of future events, or ability to know any thing not revealed in the Bible. It is for the *sanctifying influences* of the Spirit we plead. The apostles and first christians received from the Spirit, not only the miraculous powers just mentioned, but *light in their understandings, conviction of sin in their consciences, and faith and love to Christ in their hearts.*

"They purified their souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit;" they "abounded in hope by the Holy Ghost;" they had "joy in the Holy Ghost:" "the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost." Through the same Spirit they "mortified the deeds of the body;" and cried "Abba, Father." The Spirit was "the earnest of their heavenly inheritance;" and all their holy tempers, affections, and actions, are called "fruits of the Spirit." Are not all these things as necessary to us as they were to them? Corrupt nature is just the same now as then, and needs the same power to change it. Grace is also just the same now as it was then, and is derived from the same source. This alone is enough to prove the necessity of the Spirit's work.

Observe, also, that our blessed Lord promised that his Spirit should *abide* and *continue* with the church instead of his bodily presence. So he speaks, John xiv. 18, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may *abide with you for ever*." Observe, he was promised to abide with the church *for ever*; not with the apostles only, for he was to be "given to all who should believe;" and that, not for two or three hundred years, but for ever; all the time of Christ's absence from earth, until he shall come the second time to judgment. But this will more fully appear by considering the *purposes* for which the Spirit is given.

All men are by nature "dead in trespasses and sins;" dead to God and spiritual things; as a corpse in the grave is dead to the affairs of the world. Now "it is the Spirit that quickeneth," John vi. 63. The word of Christ in the gospel is employed for this end. "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God;" but it is by the Spirit's power that the dead soul is quickened to hear it. The word is brought home to the heart, and is then heard, "not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God." O, that the word may now be heard among us in this manner! "There is but one word in scripture for the air which the body breathes, and for that grace which is the breath of our spiritual life; and therefore, when our blessed Lord breathed upon the apostles, he at the same time explained the meaning of what he did, by saying,

“*Receive ye the Holy Ghost ;*” and hence it is called *inspiration*, or breathing in ; for it is the gracious office of the Holy Ghost to act upon the soul, as breath does on the body.

The Spirit of God is called the “ Spirit of truth.” No man knows the truth, in a saving manner, but by his teaching. A scholar may know the letter of it, but no human learning can give its true meaning. St. Paul affirms, 1 Cor. ii. 14, “ The natural man (that is, the rational man) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him : neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned ;” and he says, verse 12, “ We have received the Spirit of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God ;”—that is, we have been taught and enlightened by him, that we might have a true and saving knowledge of the great and glorious blessings of the gospel ; and, indeed, no other teaching is sufficient for the purpose. It is well said in one of the Homilies, “ Man’s human and worldly wisdom and science is not needful to the understanding of scripture, but the revelation of the Holy Ghost, who inspireth the true meaning unto them that with humility and diligence search therefor.” This is great comfort for poor people, who are apt to say, they are no scholars, and therefore cannot understand the Bible. Pray, my friends, for the Holy Spirit, and you will then understand it better than the most learned man who has not the Spirit.

Again, the Spirit is given to every real christian to “reprove, or *convince of sin.*” We are by nature ignorant of God’s holy law, and therefore of sin, which is the transgression of the law. We are “ alive without the law,” as St. Paul once was ; and when the commandment comes home to the conscience by the power of the blessed Spirit, then we are deeply sensible of our lost and ruined condition ; of the sins of our life ; sins of omission as well as of commission ; of the sins of our heart ; and of the sin of our nature ; but the Holy Spirit convinces us especially of the great sin of unbelief, in rejecting Christ, and neglecting his precious salvation.

Again, it is by the power of the Spirit, that we are enabled to believe to the saving of the soul. If we see the need of salvation, it is by his grace. If we see the way

of salvation, it is by his teaching. If we are made willing to be saved in that way, it is by his power. Faith is the gift of God. We believe by the operation of the Spirit. And indeed it is a great thing to believe. To receive cordially the whole testimony of God concerning Jesus Christ. In the view of our sin and misery, as children of wrath, to believe that Christ *can* and *will* save us. With a heavy burden of guilt on the conscience, to cast that burden on the Lord, and to find rest for our souls. To renounce our own works and merits, and trust alone to the righteousness of Christ. This is a great work ; a work that none can perform but by the "Spirit of faith."

The Spirit of Christ is also called "the Spirit of holiness;" for he is the author of that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Believers are "chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." Regeneration is the beginning of a new and spiritual life. Sanctification is a work of the Spirit in preserving and increasing that life. All true Christians are *saints*, as you may see in several of the Epistles which were written to the saints : and though through the folly and wickedness of many, that name is become a term of reproach, let all men know, that if we are not saints we cannot be saved.

Another purpose for which believers have the Spirit, is to assist them in all religious duties. "Without me, said Christ, ye can do nothing;" and St. Paul says, "We are not sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves ; but our sufficiency is of God;" that is, we have it by actual supplies of the Holy Ghost. Christ is present by his Spirit, "wherever two or three are gathered together in his name;" and if they get a blessing under the word preached, or in singing psalms or hymns, or in prayer, it is entirely from the influence of the Holy Ghost. He is said, Rom. viii. 28, to "help our infirmities in prayer;" and we read also of "praying in the Spirit, and of singing in the Spirit."

The Holy Ghost is also given to believers as a *Comforter*. Under this pleasing name, Jesus Christ promised to send him to his sorrowful disciples, and said he should *always abide* in the Church as a Comforter. Blessed be

God, there is comfort in religion. The ways of God are pleasantness and peace, and none will deny it, but those who never tried them. True happiness is found only in the way of faith, love, and obedience. The knowledge of sin forgiven; peace of conscience through the blood of Christ; a good hope through grace; victory over the fear of death;—are not these comfortable and blessed things? What can the world, or sin, propose of equal value? Well, all these are from the gracious and powerful influences of the Spirit; and this leads us to the last thing proposed.

III. The evidence of our state, as it arises from having or not having the Spirit. Our text says, that “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his,” consequently is in a dreadful condition; and dying so, must perish for ever without remedy. But the words imply a glorious truth, namely, that some persons do belong to Christ. Yes, they are his dear people, by the gift of the Father, by the purchase of his blood, and by the power of his Spirit, whereby they gave themselves up to him.

Having the Spirit, in the manner and for the purposes we have heard, is the grand proof of being in a state of salvation. This is called the *Seed*, 2 Cor. i. 21; Eph. i. 13, iv. 30. Valuable things are sealed, for the security of them, and to denote whose property they are. Thus are believers sealed. God has given them his Spirit; he dwells in their souls; he quickens them; he enlightens them; he convinces them of sin; he enables them to believe in Christ; he sanctifies them; he helps them to pray; he comforts their hearts. This is God’s seal. It cannot be counterfeited.—“There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,” and who prove they are in him by “walking after the Spirit.” To be spiritually minded is life and peace. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Whoever has the Spirit has the sure *earnest* of heaven, 2 Cor. i. 22. Eph. i. 14; he becomes “a joint heir with Jesus Christ; he has the *first fruits* of the Spirit;” and both soul and body shall certainly be made happy for ever in the eternal world.

APPLICATION.—And now, dear immortals, what do you think of these things? Seeing that having the Spirit of God determines our state, how is it with you? Have you

the Spirit? It may be known. It ought to be known; for our all depends upon it. Heaven is ours, if we have the Spirit. Hell will be ours, if we die without him. Recollect a moment what has been said, and pray with David, "Search me, O Lord, and try my heart." You have heard for what purposes every believer receives the Spirit. He quickens the dead soul. Has he quickened you? Are you alive to God, or are you alive to sin and the world? He enlightens the mind in the truth. Do you know, distinguish, and love the truth of the gospel, or do you despise and hate it? He convinces of sin. Are you convinced and humbled for your iniquity? or do you make light of it—perhaps boast of it? He is the author of faith. Do you believe in Jesus, or do you neglect his salvation? He sanctifies the soul. Is your soul sanctified by his grace, or are you wallowing in the filth of sin? He helps the true Christian to pray. Do you know any thing of his gracious help in prayer, or do you live without prayer, or which is nearly as bad, content yourself with a lifeless form of bare words without the heart? The Spirit of God is a Comforter. Is your comfort or pleasure derived from him, or from the vanities and vices of the world? May the Lord enable you to give a serious and honest answer to these inquiries! If, as it may be feared, some of you are without the Spirit, what is your case? You belong not to Christ; you are none of his. Tremble at the dreadful thought. Die you must; and you must come to judgment too. When you see him on the awful throne, O how you will wish to belong to him, and to be owned by him. O, then, be persuaded this moment to lift up your heart to God, and say, Merciful God, give me thy Holy Spirit? He has promised to give him to those who ask. This blessed gift may yet be yours, and shall, if you sincerely desire it. "Ask then, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and the door shall be opened." God Almighty, in compassion to your souls, enable you to do this.

And as to those who have obtained this greatest of blessings, who have the Holy Spirit, what more can be said to you? Survey the wondrous gift with grateful acknowledgment. What has God wrought! Deny not, from *false humility*, the heavenly benefit. Have you experienced

those sacred effects of the Spirit, which have been so frequently mentioned ; here then is the broad seal of the Majesty of heaven, securing your relation to Christ, and your title to mansions of glory. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad ; and having received the Spirit, take care to " walk in the Spirit ;" be careful not to " grieve the Spirit ;" and be concerned to bring forth " the fruits of the Spirit," which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God.—Amen.

SERMON X.

HOLINESS.

Heb. xii. 14. Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

HOLY, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty !¹² This is the language of saints and angels in their solemn worship. Yes : the God who made us ; the God who rules us ; the God who will judge us ; is most holy. " Who is like unto him, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders ?" The due consideration of God's holiness will make us serious at all times, and especially when we consider our own unholiness. Well may each of us adopt the words of the prophet Isaiah, " Woe is me ! for I am undone ; because I am a man of unclean lips ; and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."—" Who can stand before his holy Lord God ?"

When God created man, he made him holy. God created man in his own image, which image was holiness ; for this is the peculiar character of God. But man soon lost the glory of his nature by sin. He became an unholy being ; and God, who is of " purer eyes than to behold evil, and who cannot look upon iniquity," banished him from paradise ; for sin broke off the happy intimacy that before subsisted. As there can be no communion between light and darkness, so there can be no communion between a holy God and an unholy sinner. And this is the reason of what is affirmed in our text, that " without holiness no man shall see the Lord." To " see the Lord," is a description of the happiness of heaven, where all his divin-

perfections will be displayed, to the admiration and delight of all the redeemed ; but we cannot see him without holiness. Now God, who made man holy at first, has graciously contrived to make him holy again. This is a chief part of his great salvation ; for by the blood of Christ the guilt of sin is taken away from believers ; and by the Spirit of Christ they are born again, and made new creatures ; that is, they are made holy, and so made meet for heaven, which is seeing God. "The pure in heart shall see God."

Our business at this time is,

I. To shew what holiness is.

II. To prove the necessity of holiness ; and,

III. To point out the means of holiness.

I. Let us consider the nature of true holiness.—Briefly, Holiness is the image of God restored in the soul ; or, in other words, "Holiness is that purity of a man, in his nature, inclinations, and actions, which is an imitation and expression of the divine image."

Observe here, holiness is *purity* ; the contrary of that horrid defilement sin has produced in the soul of man. There are two things in sin, the *guilt* of it, and the *defilement* of it. By the guilt of it, we are liable to eternal punishment ; by the defilement of it, we are made unfit to serve or enjoy God. Guilt makes us afraid. Defilement makes us ashamed. Thus Adam had both guilt and fear upon his first sin. Now, in the salvation of Jesus Christ, God has provided for taking both these away from us. The guilt of sin is wholly removed from those who believe by the blood of Christ, which made atonement for it. The filth of sin is removed, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, in all those who are born again.

The purity we speak of is the purity of the heart, or nature. It is not enough that the outward actions are not impure ; there can be no true holiness till the heart is purified. Now many people overlook this entirely. They think it enough, if they are *good livers*, as they call it, or do good works. This was the fatal mistake of the Pharisees, so severely exposed by our blessed Lord. They were *very particular* about meats and drinks, and washing every thing, to prevent defilement ; but he charges them with

washing the outside only, and taking no care of the heart : they drew nigh to God with the mouth, but their heart was far from him. Their inward part was very wickedness ; they were like white-washed tombs, beautiful without, but full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Our Lord therefore insisted upon the necessity of being born again ; or being partaker of a new and divine nature. Believers are " born from above," " born of God ;" and as every child partakes of the same nature with his father, so do the new-born sons of God ; they " put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts ; they are renewed in the spirit of their minds, and put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." Eph. iv. 22—24.

The heart being thus renewed, there must of course be new dispositions and inclinations. Every nature has its proper desires and inclinations. Those of the Christian are holy, in conformity to the will of God. The alteration that grace makes is strikingly represented by the prophet Isaiah, in the 11th chapter :—" The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb ; and the leopard shall lie down with the kid ; and the calf, and the young lion, and the cow, and the bear, shall lie down and feed together ;"—that is, wicked men, however fierce, shall be so altered by the efficacy of the gospel and grace of Christ, that they shall become meek, and gentle, and loving, even to the weakest christians. Brethren, have you experienced any change of this sort ? And what must we think of persecutors, who despise religion ? who hate and hurt serious people ? Surely these are still lions and wolves, and cannot be esteemed the sheep of Christ. O that such may know what it is to be born again !

Let us now consider briefly, what are the prevailing dispositions and inclinations of holy persons.

They are under the habitual influence of the *fear of God*—not the fear of a slave, but the fear of a child. God has put his fear into their hearts ; so that, instead of living without him, and contrary to him, as once they did, they are in the fear of God all the day long. They know that *his eye is upon them* ; they set him always before them ;

and their desire is, to please and glorify him in all they think, and speak, and do.

Again, They are *humble*. Humility is the root of all other graces, and the only soil in which they will grow. They know themselves ; they know the plague of their own hearts ; they are conscious of innumerable sins, to which the world are strangers. The remembrance of sins committed in their carnal state covers them with shame : and the sense of much remaining corruption keeps them low in their own eyes ; so that they not only lie in the dust before God, but they are kept from despising their neighbour. If they differ from the worst of mankind, they remember that grace alone made them to differ. Thus, being converted, they receive the kingdom of heaven as little children, and learn to live constantly dependent on the wisdom, grace, and power, of their heavenly Father.

Once more, Holy persons are *spiritual* and *heavenly-minded* ; for “to be carnally minded is death ; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” Faith has led them to regard future and eternal things far above the vanities of time ; for that faith by which they now live, is “the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.” “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Their minds are disposed to prefer spiritual to carnal things. When engaged in spiritual duties they are in their element ; and, at times, can look down with becoming indifference on all the trifles of time. Their “conversation is in heaven.” By the cross of Christ “the world is crucified to them ;” that is, they are no more delighted with the world, than a good man would be with the rotten carcase of a malefactor ; and they likewise are “crucified to the world ;” the world can act upon them with no greater efficacy, than the objects of sense upon a dead person.

But above all, *Love*, is the grand prevailing disposition of holy persons. Without love, all attainments and professions are vain. God says, “My son, give me thine heart ;” and the believer replies—

“Take my poor heart, and let it be
“For ever clos’d to all but thee.”

God appears infinitely lovely to all true believers. His love in Christ Jesus is strongly attractive. They love him, because he first loved them. Having a good hope through grace that God for Christ's sake has pardoned their sins, accepted their persons, and that he will bring them to glory, they feel themselves constrained to depart from iniquity, which they know he hates, and to practise holiness, which they know he loves. Hence his people, his word, his day, his cause, become their delight; and to glorify him is the new end of their being. This leads us further to observe, that the *actions* of such persons must needs be holy also; their nature being renewed, and their dispositions sanctified.

They become holy in all manner of conversation and godliness. It would be infamous hypocrisy in a man to profess that his heart is holy, if his life is immoral. Morality there may be without holiness; but there can be no holiness without morality. The law of God being written on the heart, and the love of God shed abroad in it, obedience will become easy and pleasant. Christ's yoke is easy, and his burden is light. But here is a large field, which we can but just enter upon.

Good works, properly so called, must be done from a *right principle*; that is, the new nature, or grace of the Spirit in a believer: they must be done according to a *right rule*, which is the word of God; and they must be done to a *right end*; and that is, to glorify God. O how few works are truly good, if tried by these rules!

Holiness comprehends all the duties we owe to God; these must be regarded in the *first place*: whereas many people leave them entirely out of their account. What is more common than to hear ignorant persons comfort themselves against the fears of death, by their having been honest, and having paid every one his own. To such people we may put the question that a minister once put to such a person on a dying bed—"But have you paid God what you owed him?" Alas, we owe God our hearts, our love, our obedience; but how many have forgot God; lived without God; and rebelled against God all their lives. But a holy man has a steady regard to the word, will, and glory of God, in all his ways.

Nor will our neighbour be forgotten. Religion does not consist entirely in praying and worshipping God ; the human man brings religion into all his concerns ; according to the ancient promise, Zech. xiv. 20, "In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses, *Holiness unto the Lord* that is, Holiness shall not be confined to priests and temples ; it shall be brought into common life, and all the concerns of it be managed to the glory of God. It is a great truth, "that to be *really* holy is to be *relative* holy." Holiness will make good husbands and wives ; good parents and children ; good masters and mistresses ; good tradesmen ; good servants ; and good subjects. *It will* do this. It actually does it, to the astonishment of all who observe it ; and this is the best way that people can take to promote the gospel, and make their neighbours like it. Thus must every believer become a practical preacher, "holding forth the word of life." "Our light must shine before men," and then, "they, seeing our good works, will glorify our Father which is in heaven." This is a short account of real holiness : let us now proceed,

II. To prove the *necessity of holiness* : our text declares that "without it no man shall see the Lord." The whole Scripture testifies to the same truth. And surely it must be evident, in a moment, to every considerate person, for sin is a part of our salvation ; and to talk of being saved without holiness is as absurd, as to speak of being saved without salvation. Jesus Christ came to save us *from our sins*, not to save us *in* them. To be saved from the guilt of sin, or be pardoned, is but half our salvation ; Jesus Christ was equally designed by his death to "redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Christ therefore cannot, will not, be divided ; we must have the whole of his salvation, or none of it. Let none therefore dream of salvation, while the love and practice of sin is voluntarily continued.

Besides, *the command of God* shews the necessity of holiness. What is the language of the law ? "I am the Lord your God, ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy, for I am holy :" and it is the language of the holy gospel too. To shew the eternal force and power

ty of this reason, it is transferred to the New Testament, where St. Peter saith, "As he who hath called you holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." The same "gospel that brings salvation teaches us to detest ungodliness and worldly lusts; and to live soberly, devoutly, and godly, in this present world."

Again, *The electing love of God* proves the necessity of holiness. Did God choose from all eternity those whom he will finally glorify? Yes; but for what purpose? "That they should be holy," Eph. i. 4. Did he predestinate them to eternal life? Yes, and for this end, "that they should be conformed to the image of his Son," Rom. viii.

And accordingly, such persons are exhorted by St. Paul, Col. iii. 12, to "put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, gentleness," &c. These things become them, and are rewarded of them, on account of their interest in the electing love of God.

Above all, *the nature of God*, who is himself infinite holiness, and *the nature of heaven*, which consists in the service, and enjoyment of God, make it absolutely necessary that we should be holy; for "without this," as the text affirms, "no man shall see the Lord." *No man*; of whom he may. Whether high or low; rich or poor; learned or ignorant; esteemed or disesteemed of men. *Man*; whatever his knowledge or religion may be, or ever high his profession; whether he boast of his virtue or his creed, of his works, or his prayers—all, all is in vain without holiness. Let no man then deceive himself with vain words: the God of heaven has decreed that the ungodly man shall not enter into his kingdom.

Indeed, it is most certain that heaven itself would be a curse to the wicked. The natural man well knows and must confess he has no relish for any thing heavenly. His pleasures are sensual and worldly. His delight is in folly, and in sin. The wicked of the earth are his chosen companions. He hates and persecutes the godly; despises them because they are saints; perhaps disturbs their worship, and injures their persons. Prayer and praise, reading and hearing the word of God, are dull and melancholy to him. *The sabbath* itself is a burden. How then can

an unholy soul go to heaven? It is impossible in the nature of things, and doubly impossible by the decree of God. Much more might be said to shew the necessity of holiness; but surely enough has been said to satisfy every reasonable person. May we not hope that some are now saying, yes, it is plain enough. God has said it, and I believe it. I believe it for myself, and I am now ready to inquire, how may I, who am an unholy creature by nature and by practice, become holy? We shall gladly answer so necessary an inquiry, for this is the last thing proposed, namely,

III. *The means* whereby we may become holy.

And here it is necessary to observe, that no person in a natural state can arrive at true holiness by his own power or exertions. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh?" nothing more, nothing better, nor ever will be. Till we are born again; till we believe in Christ; till we are united to him; we can never be holy in the least degree. The shadow and resemblance of holiness there may be, in morality and virtue; but all the true holiness that ever was in the world, or ever will be in it, is as much from Christ, as all the light we have is from the sun. In vain therefore do poor ignorant souls labour for very vanity, in fasting, praying, penances, &c. &c. while they forget Christ. Equally wrong is their notion, who think they must not be indebted to Christ for pardon, but to their own good endeavours for holiness: the language of the true Christian is, "Surely in the Lord Jesus have I righteousness and strength."

Know, therefore, my friends, that as the sin of our nature was derived to us from Adam, the first man, so all the holiness of our new nature must be derived to us from Jesus Christ, the second Adam; that "as we have borne the image of the earthly, we may also bear the image of the heavenly." Now, blessed be God, there is a fulness of grace in Christ for his whole church; of which church are we, if enabled by faith to receive Christ, and out of his fulness receive grace for grace.

Faith is that grace, which God has appointed as the means of our becoming holy. People have a very wrong notion of faith, who think it an enemy of holiness, or good

works. If we look into the Scripture, we shall find that the hearts of the vilest heathens were "purified by faith in Christ," Acts xv. 9; and "sanctified by faith," Acts xvi. 18. The faith that brings the convinced sinner to Christ, for salvation, receives from him, as it were, pardon with one hand, and holiness with the other; both being equally the design of Christ in his mediatorial work, and equally the desire of every new born soul.

Observe, likewise, that *the comforts of the gospel*, such as assurance of God's love and pardon of our sins; peace of conscience; joy in the Holy Ghost; and the hope of glory; have a wonderful tendency to promote our holiness.

For the same purpose we must diligently *read our Bibles*; frequently *hear* the preached gospel; and especially abound in *prayer*. These are properly called *Means of grace*; and though they have no power in themselves to make us holy, yet they are appointed of God for our use; he has graciously promised to bless them; and in the diligent use of them every grace of the Spirit is exercised, and by exercise increased. Thus a sense of the evil of sin, and of the beauty of holiness, is kept up; and thus, especially are our souls led out of themselves, in direct acts of faith, to Jesus, and so enabled to receive daily supplies of grace for our growth in holiness, even "grace for grace."

APPLICATION.—And is this holiness? O, my friends, where is it to be found! O how little is it to be seen in our world! Yet this is indeed that image of God in which every true Christian is renewed, and without which a person is yet in his sins, and dying so must perish for ever.

And does not this alarm the careless sinner, who daily indulges the love and practice of sin? Say, dying fellow-creature, is not thy heart as far from this holiness as the east is from west? You know it is. And what must be the consequence? Dost thou not believe the God of truth, that this unholiness must shut you out of heaven? Has it not been clearly proved that such as you cannot be admitted there? Your own heart allows that it is impossible.

But surely you are not willing matters should remain *thus*. Does a desire arise in your heart, O that I were

holy? Well, blessed be God for such a desire. Know, my friends, that all are alike by nature. If any here are made holy, sovereign grace made them so. Do you begin to cry, What must I do? We answer, first look to Christ for the pardon of your sins; and then, for the purity of your heart. You must not first strive to make yourselves better, and then think you may come to him with better hope of salvation; but come *now*, come *just as you are*, and the friend of sinners will receive you.

The same direction may be useful to those, who are seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness; who mourn over remaining corruption, and long for the image of God. Look to Jesus for it. Remember that, by virtue of union to Christ, you may, by faith, derive daily grace from him through the power of the Holy Spirit. "Without him you can do nothing;" but "his grace is sufficient" for all things. In the exercise of constant faith, and in the diligent use of all appointed means, expect the supplies of the Spirit: believing, assuredly, that he who has begun the good work in you, will carry it on, till made meet for the heavenly inheritance.

SERMON XI.

DEATH AND JUDGMENT.

Heb. ix. 27. It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the Judgment.

IT is recorded of Philip, King of Macedon, that he ordered one of his pages to come every morning to his chamber door, and cry aloud,—“Philip, remember thou art mortal!” How much the conduct of this heathen prince shames numbers of people called Christians! who, instead of keeping their mortality in mind, do all in their power to forget it. This discourse is intended to call your serious attention to what so much concerns you. Like Moses therefore we say, “O that you were wise, that you understood this, that you would consider your latter end!” May you be led to pray, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

Our first business at this time is with DEATH. There is something solemn in the very name! but O, who can tell what death is? None of our relations or neighbours return from the grave to inform us; we must learn its nature, its cause, and its consequences, from the faithful word of God. We may indeed see something of it in our dying friends. We may see the hasty progress of some fatal disease. The pains, the groans, the agonies of the dying, we have observed. We have seen many a man cut down in the midst of life; hearty, strong, and cheerful, one week; the next, a pale, cold, lifeless corpse, lying in his coffin, and carried to the churchyard. Others we have seen, or heard of, cut off without a moment's warning; perfectly well one moment, the next in eternity. How true is the Scripture, "All flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field; in the morning it flourisheth, in the evening it is cut down and withered." How frail is man! At "his best estate he is altogether vanity." He is crushed sooner than the moth.

What awful *separations* does death make! It removes us at once from our nearest relations and dearest friends. We shut our eyes to all the world; "we shall see man no more in the land of the living." Death puts a sudden period to all our projects, good or bad; "in that very day our thoughts perish." It deprives the great of all their pomp and power, and the rich of all their possessions, for man "bringeth nothing with him into this world, and it is certain he can carry nothing out."

Death is *universal*. Other evils are partial. But all men die; "for what man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?" Death has reigned in all ages; and though in early times some men lived many hundred years, yet they all died at last. Death reigns in all countries: as certainly as the tide ebbs and flows, so "one generation passeth away, and another cometh." This is "the way of all flesh." "The grave is the house appointed for all living." There is no discharge in this war. "We must needs die."

Death is in *itself* awful! The fear of death; the agonies of death: the ghastly appearance of the dead; the sad change that takes place in the body, which renders it

offensive, and obliges us to bury it out of our sight ; the coffin, the shroud, the cold grave, the crawling worms, the sordid dust—all these are terrible things to nature. But what makes death a thousand times more terrible is, that it is *the effect of God's anger*. Had there been no sin, there had been no death. God, to keep Adam from sin, threatened him with death ; but Satan, the father of lies, said he should not die. He ventured on the forbidden fruit, and so, by his sin, "death came into the world, and hath passed upon all" his children in every succeeding age. Death, then is, "the wages of sin ;" and carries with it the most awful marks of God's anger. This is justly called by St. Paul the *sting* of death : "the sting of death is sin." It is the consciousness of guilt, and the just dread of future misery, which makes death so very dreadful. Poor thoughtless mortals, neglecting to regard the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, which brings a sovereign remedy, an antidote to death, are unwilling to think of it : they put off as much as possible the evil day : but did they know the love of Christ in dying to disarm death of its sting ; did they consider, that, by faith in Jesus, all the danger of death may be avoided ; they would sit down and look death in the face ; and wisely consider how they may meet, with safety and pleasure, what they can never avoid.

For let it be remembered, that the death of each of us here present, is absolutely certain. Our text says, "*it is appointed :*" it is the firm decree of God, which cannot be reversed. It is the unalterable law of God, a law which no sinner can transgress ; other laws of God are trampled under feet, but this *must* be obeyed. We know not *when*, or *how*, we shall die : but we are sure that we *must* die. Whether we are high or low ; rich or poor ; male or female ; young or old ; "it is appointed for us once to die." Possibly, when death comes, we may be very unfit to die ; very unwilling to die ; but death will not delay on that account : ready or unready, when the hour comes, we must submit. It is said of the wicked—"he is *driven away* in his wickedness"—*suddenly* perhaps ; at least *unexpectedly*. It was "when the rich fool" talked of many years to come, that God said to him, "this night shall thy soul be required of thee ;" often violently dragged to the grave

like a malefactor to the gallows. O what would some great and rich sinners have given for a few weeks, or a few hours of life, if money could have bought them : but death will not be bribed : go the sinner must, "although the physicians help, friends groan, the wife and children weep, and the man himself use his utmost endeavours to retain the spirit ; his soul is required of him ; yield he must, and go where he shall never more see the light."

Here let us stop a moment, and apply to ourselves what has already been said.

Is life so short? Then why should we waste it? Why should we make it shorter by our sin and folly? How much of our precious time is entirely lost! What shall we think of sports and pastimes, cards, and plays, and dancing, which are expressly intended to *kill time*?—To *kill time*! Shocking expression to the ears of a Christian! O, had you heard what some dying sinners have said of their murdered time, when time with them was nearly over, you would dread the thought of killing time; rather would you study how to "redeem time," and obey the direction of the wise man, Eccl. ix. 10. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest." Particularly be careful to improve holy time, I mean the Lord's day: the day which the Lord has graciously appointed for your spiritual improvement. The abuse of this day is one of the greatest sources of sin and infidelity; and the recollection of the neglect of it is often dreadfully painful to dying people. Be exhorted, then, diligently regard the means of grace on this day, and improve every sabbath as the most precious portion of a short life.

Is death certain? Will it surely come, and you know not how soon? Then let it be your first business to prepare for it? This is our Lord's advice; "Be ye also ready, for ye know not when the Son of Man cometh." It is appointed unto men *once* to die, once only; now that which can be done but once should be well done; especially as our eternal all depends upon it. As the tree falls so it lies; *as death leaves us judgment finds us*; if an error happens here, it can never be remedied. Surely then it is the high-

est wisdom of man to prepare for this great change. Do you ask what it is to be prepared? I answer, it is to have your sins pardoned and your soul sanctified; for "Sin is the sting of death;" if your sins are pardoned you need not fear to die; and if your soul is sanctified by grace, death will be your gain. This then is your great concern, your immediate business. Fly, instantly fly, to the Saviour's arms. He died that we might live. His blood cleanseth from all sin. He will wash every soul from sin who applies to him for that purpose; and, at the same time, bestow his Holy Spirit to sanctify the soul, and make it meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Happy for those who are in this blessed state; they may say, "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; so that living and dying we are the Lord's." God grant this may be the happy condition of us all.

Let us now proceed to the *second* part of this great subject, namely, ETERNAL JUDGMENT; "after death the judgment."

Immediately after death, it is presumed, the soul, separated from the body, appears before God; and by a private, particular, and personal judgment, receives the sentence of eternal life, or eternal death. The Scripture abundantly shews, that the soul subsists in a separate state from the body. Our Lord promised the dying thief that he should be with him, on the very day of his death, in paradise; and St. Paul longed to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord; accounting it far better than the highest state of privilege or usefulness in the church.

But the accounts we have in the Scripture of the judgment refer to *the great day*, when the dead shall be raised from their graves, when small and great shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ. The glory and grandeur of this day will be far beyond the power of language to express. "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised." "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, with his mighty angels." "The Son of Man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him: then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall sepa-

rate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats.

Reason itself must allow the necessity of a future judgment. At present, we often see the wicked prosper, while good men are much afflicted. How many murderers, oppressors, and persecutors, escape punishment. But it is inconsistent with the justice of God that it should always be so. "He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, when all men shall give an account of what they have done in the body, whether it be good or bad." Even now *conscience* testifies to the future judgment, by passing a private sentence on all our actions; and summoning us to appear at the bar of God, to answer for them.

To show how justly and righteously every thing will be done on that occasion, it is said, Rev. xx. 12. "The books were opened, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

The *law* will be opened. The commandments of God are the rule of men's actions; and are any "of the works of the law?" Do they seek righteousness by their doings? Let them now appeal to the Searcher of hearts, that they never broke this law in thought, word, or deed; but loved and served God perfectly, without sin, all their lives; then may they claim life by the law; but this is impossible. No man living will be justified in this manner; but the law will for ever condemn all who have broken it, yet have neglected the great salvation revealed.

The book of the *gospel*. In this blessed book "the law of faith" is revealed; "the righteousness of God by faith is revealed to faith;" it is declared, that he that believeth in Jesus shall be saved; and happy will it be for those who are found true believers, who, having known their ruined and helpless state by the law, have fled for refuge to the grace of the gospel, and, believing in Jesus for righteousness, are "found in him."

Beside these, the book of God's remembrance will be opened. God, who knows all our actions, and all our secret thoughts, records them in his book. Nothing done by *man*, whether good or bad, is forgotten; for it is writ-

ten, that "he will bring every secret thing into judgment," and "that for every idle word that men speak, they shall render an account."

Exactly agreeing with this will be the book of *conscience*, which shall also be opened; or, in plainer words, every man shall stand convicted in his own conscience, that he is guilty of every charge brought against him by the law. At present sinners take little notice of their sins; and if they feel a little remorse of conscience, soon forget it; but at the great day they will all rush upon the memory. Conscience shall serve instead of a thousand witnesses; and, as the Scripture speaks, "every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God."

But blessed be God, there will be one more book opened, and that is *the book of life*, containing a list of all the names of the people of God; even of those who were chosen by the Father to salvation; redeemed by the blood of Christ; and who were called, renewed, and sanctified, by the Holy Spirit. Here will be found the names of those people who were convinced of their sin and misery, humbled on account of their abominations, and who, being enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, came to him by precious faith, for life and salvation; and who proved the truth of their faith by the holiness of their lives and conversation.

Now hear, from the word of God, what will be the *sentences* pronounced on the assembled world, at that awful period. When a poor criminal at the assizes is tried for his life, what a solemn moment is that, when silence being demanded by an officer of the court, every voice is hushed, and every eye is fixed on the judge! Each of us shall then become, not a spectator of another's trial, but an expectant of our own sentence; that sentence which shall fix, beyond the possibility of an alteration, our happy, or our miserable doom.

Now hearken! Matt. xxiv. 34. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink," &c. &c. Let us take care, my friends, to understand this aright; for many have sadly mistaken it. We are not to

imagine, that such good works as here are mentioned merit heaven ; this is not only contrary to the whole gospel, but contrary also to the meaning of this place. You are to observe, that the judgment here represented is of professors of the gospel : all the persons here spoken of, both at the right and left hand of Christ, are such as were called by his name, and professed to be believers in him ; and when it is said they are judged *according to their works*, it means, according to the evidence of their works : that is, whether the faith they pretended to have brought forth good works, or not. The sentence passed is not *for their works*, nor *for their faith* neither. The kingdom they receive is not their *wages*, but their *inheritance* ; not merited, as it were, yesterday, but “prepared for them, before the foundation of the world ;” and they were prepared for it, not by their works, but by the grace of God, which united them to Christ, led them to believe, and enabled them to bring forth the fruits here mentioned, namely, works of love to the saints, not mere works of humanity ; but of love to the poor despised saints of God, because they belonged to Jesus. These happy persons you see had no proud thoughts of the merit of their actions, for they humbly cry, “Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and gave thee meat ?”

But O how awful is the other sentence ! “Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, *Depart ye cursed*, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels !” O what a word is that—“*Depart*.” What ! depart from Christ ? Depart from the fountain of all happiness ? It will be to the condemned sinner the most dreadful word that ever sounded in his ears : and yet how dreadfully just ! for it will be said to that sinner, who, in his heart, has said a thousand times to Christ, “Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways.”

This sentence will be pronounced against those professors of religion, whose pretended faith did not produce the fruits of love to the saints. Sins of *omission* only are here mentioned ! neglecting to help and relieve the poor and afflicted members of Christ. And if this will be sufficient ground of condemnation, what think you will be the lot of *persecutors*, who, instead of feeding, clothing and visiting the members of Christ robbed them of their food, ra-

ment, liberty, and life? What will be the portion of drunkards, swearers, whoremongers, sabbath-breakers, and the whole herd of profane and vicious sinners? Such, we are elsewhere assured, shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven, but must have their portion with devils and damned spirits.

APPLICATION.—When St. Paul, reasoned “of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, *Felix trembled.*” Did a heathen judge tremble, and shall a Christian be stupid and unaffected? “Behold he cometh with clouds! Every eye shall see him!” *Your* eyes shall see him. You have received the solemn summons this day. What will you do? If wise, you will act like Noah, “who, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, builded an ark, to the saving of his house.” If unwise, you will be like his infidel neighbours, who laughed him to scorn, and perished in the flood. If ever you would wish then to be numbered with the saints, now lay to heart the solemn truths you have heard. Retire a little from the bustle of the world, and from the company of the gay. Endeavour to realize the important scene. O think of the tremendous day, and the poor miserable state of poor Christless sinners. “Those who are then found Christless, will also be speechless, helpless, and hopeless. How will their heads hang down, and their knees knock together! O what pale faces, quivering lips, and fainting hearts! O dreadful day, when the earth shall be trembling, the stars falling, the trumpet sounding, the dead rising, the elements melting, and the world on fire.”

This scene, so tremendous to a sinner, will be the most happy and joyful that ever was known to the humble believer in Jesus. The second coming of Christ is spoken of in Scripture as a most desirable event; and true Christians are described as “loving his appearance,” and saying, “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.” And would you not wish to call this great and glorious Judge your friend, and to be owned by him at the great day? Well then, know, my friends, that he is now set before you in the gospel, as an all-sufficient and most gracious Saviour. He is now as *gracious* as he will then be glorious. Why would you *keep at a distance* from him? His blood can cleanse you *from all your past sins*, though deeply dyed as scarlet and

crimson. He came to seek and save such sinners as you. Look then to him, and be saved. Come but to him, he will not cast you out. Believe in him, and he will be your friend. Your first business in religion is to fly to your Saviour's arms, and find salvation in his blood. He will then give you his Holy Spirit, to soften your hearts, subdue your iniquities, and enable you to bring forth those works of love, which he will graciously own and reward in the great day.

Let the thoughts of "appointed death and judgment" be duly improved by the believer. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of God?" What watchfulness, what seriousness becomes us! Let us be concerned to be always ready; daily walking humbly and closely with God; sitting loose to all created objects, from which death may so suddenly separate us; and having our affections set on heavenly things, to which death will so readily transmit us. Look on death as a disarmed foe; a serpent which may hiss, but cannot sting. Look on judgment as a most desirable event; when, soul and body being united, and made perfect in holiness, shall be openly acknowledged, and for ever made happy in the full enjoyment of Christ to all eternity.

Blessed be God, for Jesus Christ.

SERMON XII.

HELL AND HEAVEN.

Matt. xxvi. 46. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into Life eternal.

THAT there are two eternal states, the one of happiness, and the other of misery, in one of which each of us will soon be fixed, is a truth which most men profess to believe. But if we look at the actions of most men, and these speak louder than their words, we are forced to say with the scripture—"all men have not faith." A true belief of an eternal hell, and an eternal heaven, cannot fail to

is not seven years, or fourteen years, or a hundred years; it is not a thousand years, it is not merely as long as from the foundation of the world to this day! O how would the damned rejoice, if ten thousand years might finish their miseries! but it is for ETERNITY. Do you start at the word? It is Christ's word. Christ says, in the text, "these shall go away into *everlasting* punishment." In vain do letter-learned men try to reason away the solemn truth, and lessen the duration of future punishment; Christ says it is *eternal*: and uses the very same word to signify an *eternal heaven*, as he does to express an *eternal hell*: (for the words are the same in the original) besides it is said, Rev. xiv. 11, "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever;" and our Lord also declares, "their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched."

Tremble, sinner, at "the wrath *to come*." That wrath which is now coming, and will soon be here, will even then "be wrath *to come*." When a million million years are past, it will still be "wrath *to come*," because it shall never have an end.

O that we could impress upon you a lasting idea of *Eternity*! Suppose all the vast ocean to be distilled by single drops, and a thousand years to pass between every drop; how many millions of years would it take to empty it? Suppose the whole world to be made up of grains of sand, and one grain only to be taken away in a thousand years; how many millions of years would it take to remove the whole? We cannot count how long: yet we suppose it may be done in a most immense length of time. Suppose it done. Suppose the ocean emptied, drop by drop. Suppose the globe reduced, grain by grain, to the last sand. But would eternity be spent? Would eternity be lessened? No, not at all. It is a whole eternity still; and the torments of the damned would be as far from an end, as when the reckoning began. A minute bears some proportion to a million of years; but millions of millions bear no proportion to eternity.

Sinner, have you reason? Have you common sense? *Have you self-love?* Summon up your powers, then, and *determine* this moment, whether you had best go on in the *way of sin*, for the sake of your short-lived pleasures, thus

to be repaid with everlasting woe; or whether it will not be your wisdom this moment to forsake them, and, by the grace of God, choose the way to eternal life.

Before we proceed, stop, and take a view of *sin*. Will any man but a fool "make a mock of sin," when he sees what its wages are? Is that "a madman who casteth about arrows, firebrands, and death, and saith, Am I not in sport?" He is ten thousand times more mad, who sports with sin, and laughs at that which fills hell with groans and tears. Be persuaded not to trifle, as many do, with the name of hell and damnation. Many, who cannot bear to hear these in a sermon, use them in a jesting manner, in their common discourse. This is one of Satan's ways to ruin souls. People sport with these things, till they forget their importance, and find, too late, that they are serious matters.

"Who laughs at sin laughs at his Maker's frowns;
Laughs at the sword of justice o'er his head;
Laughs at the dear Redeemer's tears and wounds,
Who, but for sin, had never groan'd nor bled!"

"Awake then, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Fly, sinner, from the "wrath to come." "Escape, for thy life, look not behind thee, tarry not in all the plain, lest thou be consumed." Think, what a miserable soul in hell would give to be in thy present situation. Think, how hell would resound with joy, could the good news of salvation be preached to lost souls. Well, Sirs, they are preached to *you*. This day is salvation come to this house. As yet, there is hope. Christ came to deliver from the wrath to come. It may be, you were brought here at this time for the very purpose of being warned to fly to the refuge. Christ is a mighty Saviour. Nothing is too hard for him. "Come, then, for all things are ready." If God has made you willing, depend upon it he will make you welcome. Who can tell, but instead of being fuel for everlasting burnings, it may be said of you—"Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire!"

We now gladly turn to the more pleasing part of our text—"but the righteous into eternal life."

Who are the righteous? "There is none righteous" upon the earth, saith the scripture, "no not one"—that is *in himself*. A righteous man and a sinner are two contraries; to be righteous, is to keep the law perfectly, which no mere man ever did; and no fallen man can; for "all have sinned;" sin being "the transgression of the law." How then can any man, being a sinner, become righteous? There is but one way. It is by the righteousness of Christ, put to the account of an unrighteous man. This righteousness Christ wrought out by his perfect obedience to the law. This righteousness is held out in the gospel; and when a sinner is convinced that he wants it, and must perish without it, he comes to God for it; God gives it him; he receives it by faith, puts it on, wears it, lives and dies in it, and being "found in Christ" he is admitted, in this wedding garment, to the marriage-supper of the Lamb.

The persons called "righteous" in the text had thus put on Christ; and the faith whereby they did so, wrought by love. The context shews how their faith wrought by works; they loved the Members of Christ for Christ's sake, and shewed their love to him, by helping them in their afflictions. These are the persons who go into life eternal.

What is heaven? A carnal man can have no idea of it, or none but what is carnal and ridiculous. It is not a Mahometan paradise, where the lusts of the flesh may be indulged. No; "life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel;" and there we find it consists in a complete deliverance from all the evils of the present state; and in the enjoyment of all that can render the soul perfectly and for ever happy.

Need we be told that "man is born to trouble?" This is our sad, and only certain inheritance; mingled indeed, with a thousand undeserved mercies. But all the sorrows of a believer shall cease at his death. No more excessive labour and fatigue. No pinching want and poverty. No painful, irksome, loathsome diseases. The inhabitant of *heaven* shall not say, "I am sick." Nor shall any of the *numberless* sorrows of mind, we now feel, follow us to *glory*. We shall not suffer in our own persons, nor shall

we suffer in or by our relations or friends. We shall "drop the body of sin" in the dust; and we shall no more be the grieved spectators of sin in the world. "God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away," Rev. xxi. 4.

But this is not all. Our knowledge, which is now so very small, shall be wonderfully increased. It is eternal life to know God; but O, how little do we now know of him? but "the pure in heart shall see God," and know in a moment, more than all the learned could attain in many years. "We shall know, even as we are known,"—we shall have as certain, immediate, and familiar a knowledge of divine things, as any of our most intimate friends now have of us; yea, we shall know God, and Christ, and angels, in the same kind of way that they now know us; not "through a glass darkly," but "face to face," as clearly and distinctly as one man beholds another when they converse together. But the heaven of heaven will be the presence of Christ, being with Christ, and beholding his glory. This is what Christ, as Mediator, prayed for in behalf of his disciples. "Father, I will, that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory," John xvii. 24. This is what Paul longed for, and wished to depart to enjoy: "I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ," Phil. i. 23. And what will render the vision of Christ so very excellent is, that "we shall be like him, when we see him as he is"—we shall bear his amiable and illustrious image of light and love, holiness and happiness, in our souls. Even our bodies, now vile by reason of sin, and which must soon be viler still in the corruption of the grave, shall, when raised from the dead, be made like unto his glorious body. Add to this another most desirable blessing; the constant company of the saints. Believers shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; with the prophets and apostles; and with all the redeemed of every nation. But what tongue can tell, what heart can conceive, what God has *prepared for them that love him?*

APPLICATION.—What more can be said to engage your regard to religion, than what has been now said? Life and death, blessing and cursing, heaven and hell, have been set before you. Surely "*one thing is needful*," even the care of the soul.

"Is there a dreadful hell?" Well; we have been warned of the danger, and advised to fly to Jesus, the only deliverer from the wrath to come.

How great is the evil of sin, seeing that God will punish it in this dreadful manner! Is there a hell of eternal torment for sinners? ☉ then be afraid of sin, however pleasant it may be. Who would drink a glass of the most delicious liquor, however thirsty he might be, if he knew that deadly poison was mixt with it? Beware then of sin, which infallibly destroys the soul, and shun it as you would shun hell.

Is there a glorious heaven? We are invited to seek it. There is but one way to heaven, and Christ is that way. O what a Saviour is Jesus? Can we, who deserve hell, avoid it? Yes, glory be to him he shed his precious blood to redeem his people from it. His perfect righteousness is the only *title* to glory; and this righteousness is theirs, who believe in him. There must also be a *fitness* for this holy state, and this is the work of the Spirit. If we are found among the redeemed, we owe it to the Father's love, the Son's salvation, and the Spirit's grace. God grant that we may so hear his word at this, and at all times, that, mixing faith with it, we may profit thereby; and "growing up into Christ in all things," and "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life," we may faithfully and diligently serve him, and our generation, according to his will; enjoy his gracious presence in all the means of grace; experience the support of his gospel in the trying hour of death; and, finally, have "abundant entrance afforded us into his everlasting kingdom and glory."

Now to the God of our salvation, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be universal and everlasting praise.—Amen.

SERMON XIII.

TO CHILDREN.

A NEW HEART THE CHILD'S BEST PORTION.

Ezek. xxxvi. 26. A new Heart will I give you.

MY dear children, I hope you will mind what I am going to say to you. I am going to read you a sermon made on purpose for children, and made so plain, that I hope you will understand it all. I suppose you know that you have *souls*, which must live when you die, and must go to heaven or hell for ever. Now do you not think it is right to mind your souls, so that they may not go to hell? I know that you love to play, and it is right you should play sometimes; but you should mind something else besides play. You know there is a God that lives in heaven, and it is he who gives you meat and drink, and clothes; it is he who keeps you from being sick, and from dying; and he does this, that you may have time to think of him, and pray to him. For I would have you know, that it is a terrible thing for God to be angry with you. It is a great deal worse than for your father and mother, or master, to be angry with you. Perhaps they may beat you when they are angry: but God Almighty can cast you into hell, to be burned in the fire for ever and ever. Perhaps you will say, I hope he will not do so to me. My dear children, I hope so too; and I read this to you, that you may know how to avoid that misery, and that you may learn the way to heaven. Now Jesus Christ is the way to heaven. He came down from heaven to save us from going to hell; and he did this by suffering and dying for our sins, that we might not suffer for them ourselves; just as if one of you was going to be beat, and punished for doing wrong, and another person should, in love to you, and to keep you from being hurt, be beat in your stead, and so you escape the punishment. The first thing that must be known, in order to your being saved, is this, that you are sinners; that you have "left undone

what you ought to have done, and that you have done the things you ought not to have done." When your parents have been angry with you for doing wrong, you have, perhaps, thought of it afterwards, and have been very sorry for it; and when you feel sorry for it, you want them to forgive you, and you go to them and ask their pardon. You also promise to do so no more. Now there is something in religion like this. We have all done what we should not do, and God may justly be angry with us; but "there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared." His dear Son Jesus Christ bore his anger for us; and he sends his servants with the Gospel, that is, good news; telling us, that if we come to him by Jesus Christ, he will forgive us, and be kind to us, and help us to do better for time to come. Now the text I have read, is God's kind promise to his children. *A new heart will I give you.* The word *heart* does not signify a part of your bodies, but it means the mind, the spirit, the disposition; that God will make it new, and right, and good; so that you should love, and serve, and enjoy him, both here and hereafter. It is the same thing that is in another place called being *born again*. You may remember reading, in the third chapter of St. John, that an aged man, named Nicodemus, came to Jesus Christ by night, to be taught by him; and that our Saviour said to him, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* By this he meant a change of heart, which is made by the power and grace of the Spirit of God. Now if the heart was not bad, there would be no need to change it; but the heart of every person, of every child, is very bad, till grace alters it. We are all born in sin, and love sin, until we are born again; and then we love Christ, and every thing that is good. And you will observe that being baptized, or christened, is not the same as being born again. Water cannot cleanse or change the heart; it is "an outward visible sign of grace," but not grace itself. The nature of this gracious change I shall now explain to you, by describing both the *old heart* which God takes away, and the *new heart* which God gives.

I. The heart is by nature hard; it is compared in the words after the text to a stone, that feels nothing: the

heart of man by nature has no feeling ; that is, no feeling of spiritual things. A person who has no grace may be tender hearted to his fellow creatures, and " weep with them that weep ;" but yet not mind what God says to him in the Bible. The Bible says we are all lost and ruined sinners ; that the wrath of God abideth on us, if we believe not ; that God is angry with the wicked, and will turn them into hell. But how few people regard this. They eat and drink, and take their pleasure, even on the Lord's day, as if nothing was the matter. Now is this not owing to the hardness of their hearts? If you were to see a poor wretch at the bar, condemned to die by the judge, and he was to remain unmoved, or even laugh in his face, you would think he had a very hard heart. Now this is the case of every sinner. My dear children, is it not *your* case? You are " by nature children of wrath, even as others ;" but when was you concerned about it? You would cry and be very sorry if your parents were angry with you, and threatened to turn you out of doors, and never see you any more ; but how much worse would it be, if God should say to you, " Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting burnings."

The hardness of the heart appears also in not being moved and melted with the goodness of God. O how good is God to us all ! He makes the sun to shine, and the flowers to spring, and the corn and herbs to grow. It is he who gives us food by day, and rest by night ; and " his goodness should lead us to repentance." " He has also so loved the world," wicked as it is " that he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And he has sent his ministers to us, with the glad tidings of this salvation, and they warn us to flee from the wrath to come ; they invite and beseech us to be reconciled to God. But how hard is the heart that remains unmoved with all this tender love and goodness. What should you think of a child, who treated a dear father or a kind mother with neglect and scorn, after they had spoken and behaved in the kindest manner to him ? Would you not think him very brutish and wicked ? Well, thus sinners treated the blessed God. *And have not you done so ? It is God who has led*

and fed you all your days. He gave you kind parents and friends to care for you when infants, or you must have been starved to death, and perished for want. He gives you clothes, and food, and health, and pleasures, and friends; and he does more, he gives you his Gospel; he sends you the word of salvation, he gives you opportunity to learn to read it, and hear it; and what return have you made for all his goodness! O that your hearts may melt in godly sorrow for sin! May the Lord give you "the heart of flesh," the soft heart, the feeling heart, which "trembles at his word," and "fears the Lord and his goodness." Then will you be afraid of the least sin; you will avoid all bad company; you will not dare to take the name of the Lord in vain; you will not play on the Sabbath day; nor will you behave badly to your parents, or any other persons. And if you have this soft heart, you will be very sorry for your sins, and sorry to think you have offended God, and sorry to think that the blessed Jesus should suffer such shocking pains as he did, for your sins.

II. The heart is by nature *proud*: but the new heart is *humble*. Man, as a *creature*, has no cause to be proud, much less as a *sinner*, yet we are all born proud. There never was a person born without a proud heart; though some do not shew it so much as others. You that are children know how apt you are to be proud of new clothes, and fine things; and how fond you are of shewing them to others; and as people grow up, they grow prouder; proud of beauty, riches, learning, or office: yea, proud of being religious. So you read of the Pharisee, who went up to the temple to pray, and with monstrous pride stood by himself, and said, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, nor even as this Publican:" and then he boasted of his good works. But God abhorred this proud wretch, while he looked with compassion on the man whom the Pharisee despised, the poor Publican, whose heart was broken for sin, and who had nothing to say for himself, but "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Even children are proud of their religion; they will boast of being better than their brothers and sisters: they love to tell of *their faults*, and of their own goodness. My dear children, why do you hope to go to heaven? Is it because

you are not so bad as others ; because you say your prayers, and go to church or meeting ? If so, you are proud ; proud of your own righteousness, which the Scripture calls “ filthy rags.” Now who would be proud of filthy rags ? But the righteousness of Christ is like a fine clean white robe ; is not that better ? And would you not be glad to have it ? Pray then to God to clothe you with it.

The new heart is a *humble* heart. The person who has it thinks so highly of the great and blessed God, the majesty of heaven and earth, that he shrinks, as it were, into nothing before him. He has such a view of the holiness of God, and his commandments, and such a sense of the wickedness and deceitfulness of his own heart, that he lies as it were in the dust, “ abhors himself, and repents in dust and ashes.”

III. The heart is by nature *worldly*. All natural men are called in Scripture—*Men of the world, whose portion is in this life* : they think only of the world, they speak only of the world, and all their desires are worldly. “ What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and how shall we be clothed ?” After all these, and only such things as these, do worldly men seek. In this case there is no heart for religion. “ God is not in all their thoughts ;” and for the sake of the world, they neglect the Gospel, and lose their own souls. They are “ careful about many things,” with Martha, but do not choose “ the one thing needful,” with Mary. Now this is a sad state to be in ! If we love the world, the love of God, is not in us, 1 John ii. 15. If we mind “ earthly things,” so as to make them our chief good, our “ end will be destruction,” Phil. iii. 19. And say now, my dear children, are not *your* hearts worldly ? Though you are not engaged in worldly business, yet your little hearts love only the things of this world. Are not play and pleasure all you seek and delight in. Perhaps you do not like prayer ; either you do not pray at all in secret, or satisfy yourselves with a few formal words which you have got by heart, without feeling any desire after Christ, and grace, and salvation. And when your parents pray in their families, as I hope they do, you do *not regard what is said* ; and when you are in the house of God, *perhaps you do not mind what the minister says, or*

content yourself merely with remembering the text. But this is not religion. The worldly heart must be taken away, and you must have a heavenly, spiritual heart, that delights in God and Christ, and prayer and praise; in the word of God and spiritual conversation. Blessed be God, there have been many such children; perhaps you have read of them in 'Janeway's Token for Children.' The Lord make you like them; that so you may live to God, if you are spared to live longer; or made fit for heaven, if he should be pleased to remove you.

IV. The heart is by nature *wicked*; the Scripture says it is *desperately* wicked, Jer. xvii. 9. And our Saviour says, Matt. xv. 19, *Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, thefts, murders, and many other bad things.* Now you know they must be in the heart, or they could not come out of it. Some people will tell you they have *good hearts*, even though they speak bad words, and do bad actions. But this is a mistake. A good tree bears good fruit; and a sweet spring does not send forth bitter waters. Now every person's heart is wicked by nature; and if some people do not commit such wicked actions as others, it is not because their hearts are better by nature, but because God would not let them be so wicked as they would; just as they chain up wild beasts to keep them from destroying us. My dear children, you may see the truth of this in yourselves. You know how apt you are, or were once, to tell lies. Nobody told you how to tell lies. You did it naturally. Now is not that a proof of a wicked heart? Lying is a great sin. It is the work of the devil, who is "a liar, and the father of lies." Lying is so hateful to God, that he will not let any liars go to heaven, "nothing that maketh a lie," Rom. xxi. but he says, ver. 8, "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." O pray to God to forgive you this great sin. You may know that your hearts are wicked by your going into a passion when you are crossed, and great anger is a degree of murder in God's esteem, Matt. v. 22. But the wickedness of the heart appears most of all in *its enmity* against God; for St. Paul says, Rom. viii. 7, "*the carnal mind is enmity against God;*" and have not you shown this in your dislike of religion, in breaking

the Sabbath, in taking the Lord's name in vain, in disobeying your parents, and in many other ways? See then how needful it is that you should have a new heart; and the new heart is a *pure heart*. Jesus Christ says, Matt. v. 8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Now the heart is "purified by faith." When we see what a wicked heart we have, and are filled with grief and fear, then we fly for refuge to Jesus Christ. Then God pardons our past sins for his sake, and gives us his Holy Spirit to make us hate sin, and fight against it; and make us desire to know his will, and love to do it. Pray then with David, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Ps. li. 10. Remember, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

V. The heart by nature is *deceitful*: yea, the Scripture says, *deceitful above all things*. It calls good evil, and evil good. It cheats people with false pretences and vain excuses; so that the way of the wicked seems right to them, although it leads to destruction. There is scarcely any sinner, however great, that does not flatter himself all will be well at last, though God tells him to the contrary. On this account, "he that trusteth his own heart is a fool." But when the Lord gives a new heart, he makes it *sincere*. A real Christian is like Nathaniel, of whom our Saviour said, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile;" that is no allowed hypocrisy in his dealings with God or man.

VI. And lastly, The heart is naturally an *unbelieving* heart. It is a sad thing that man should be more ready to believe the father of lies than the God of truth. It was by hearkening to the devil, that Eve, our first mother, sinned; and there has been in mankind ever since "an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." It is plain that people do not believe God. If they believed what he says of sin, they would not dare to practise it. If they believed what he says of Christ, surely they would come to him for life and salvation. And the reason they do not, is, they "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." But the new heart is a *believing* heart. The Christian takes God at his word. He *believes his threatenings*, and fears. He believes his pro-

mises in Christ, and hopes. He believes his commandments, and obeys. Without this faith "it is impossible to please God;" for he that believeth not God hath made him a liar. But faith glorifies God. "He that believeth on Christ hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John iii. 36.

APPLICATION.—and now, dear children, I have told you what sort of hearts we have by nature, and what the Lord can make them by his grace, I hope you will consider what I have said, and consider what hearts you have. Are they not *hard*, and *proud*, and *worldly*, and *wicked*, and *deceitful*, and *unbelieving*? I think you must own they are so by nature. And does not this shew you that you must be *born again*, and have a *new heart*? If your heart should not be changed, you will grow more wicked as you grow older; and if you should die in your sins, you will be lost for ever.

But, my dear children, I hope better things. Do not you know that Jesus Christ came "to seek, and to save that which was lost?" And do you not remember reading that some good people brought their little children to him, and desired him to bless them? And he said, *Suffer little children to come unto me*. Would you not be very glad if he was here now, and you could go and kneel down to him, and say, blessed Jesus, bless me, even me also, well, though he is in heaven, you may do this now. He is the same to-day that he was then. He loves little children as well as ever. And I beg and beseech each of you, when you go home, to go into some private place, and kneel down, and say, Blessed Jesus, I have a wicked heart, that makes me do wicked things, and I am afraid of thy anger: but I have heard in the Gospel, that thou hast died for sinners to save them from hell, and sin, and the world; O save me, lest I perish. Take away my heart of stone, and give me a heart of flesh; a heart to know, trust, and love thee, that I may serve thee in this world, and be for ever happy in the world to come.

Let none of you say, "I am not old enough, or not big enough, to be religious: it is time enough yet." Dear children, you are not too young to die. Younger than you

are in the grave. Besides, you cannot be too young to serve the Lord. Can you be *safe* too soon? Can you be happy too soon? Can you glorify God too much? Surely not. Well, then, pray for a new heart. It is the best gift that God can give you, or you receive; and may God Almighty, for Christ's sake, bestow it upon every one of you. Amen!

SERMON XIV.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

Matt. vi. 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13th verses. After this manner therefore pray ye; Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

PRAYER to God is the bounden duty of all men. "We live, and move, and have our being in him." "Every good and perfect gift proceeds from him." "Men ought therefore always to pray, and not to faint." We are so sinful, that we always need mercy. We are so weak, that we always need help. We are so empty, that we always need supplies. We are so exposed, that we always need protection. How reasonable then that we should continue in prayer.

But we greatly need direction in prayer. We know not how to pray, nor what to pray for, as we ought. Therefore Christ has been pleased to teach us in these words, which contain an excellent pattern for prayer. Not that we are tied down to use these very words, much less to use them always; but *after this manner* we are to pray. Now as many persons constantly use this prayer, it may be very useful to explain it; because it may be feared that a great many say the words without knowing their meaning, which is formality at best; and many contradict every part of this prayer by their wicked lives, which is base hypocrisy. May we therefore be assisted by the good Spirit rightly to understand it, that so, whenever we use it hereafter, we may offer up a reasonable and spiritual sacrifice, *acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

I. Our Father which art in heaven. We should always begin our prayer with proper thoughts of God. And what thoughts of him are so proper as those suggested by these words, namely, his *goodness* and his *greatness*? As a *father* he is good. As a *heavenly* father he is great. Thus are we taught to approach him with confidence and reverence.

As the Creator of all men, God may, in a general sense, be called the father of all: but it is in a higher and sweeter sense that he is here called a father. We are to take it in a Gospel view—God reconciled to believing sinners, through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. God is angry with the wicked every day. He does not look down upon them with a father's eye, nor do they look up to him with a child-like spirit. Therefore this prayer is not fit for the use of a man who lives in sin, whose carnal mind is enmity against God. How dare the swearer, the liar, the drunkard, call God a father! God will not own the relation. If such men pray, might they not rather cry—Our father which art in *hell*? for Christ said to such persons, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.” John viii. 44.

But when a person is convinced of his lost estate by sin; when he is enlightened to know Christ as a Saviour; and when by precious faith he comes to God through him; then God is reconciled to him; his anger is turned away, and he comforts him. Then he may look up to God as a merciful God, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin; for “to as many as receive Christ, and the atonement through him, he giveth power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name;” and to such only is “the spirit of adoption” given, whereby they cry “Abba, father.” For it is one thing to use the word *father*, and another to approach him, as a loving child comes to a tender parent, with a persuasion of his being able and willing to supply his wants. To such persons this name is full of comfort; for they are emboldened to believe, that if earthly parents, though evil, know how to give good gifts to their children, God, our heavenly father, is much more disposed to do them good, and bless them with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.

But this name teaches us also the *greatness* of God. Children ought to treat their earthly parents with great respect : but what reverence is due to the Father of spirits, whose throne is in the heavens ! yea, “ the heaven of heavens cannot contain him.” God is every where present ; he is not confined to heaven ; but he is said to dwell there, because there he displays the brightest beams of his glorious majesty ; and there angels and saints bow low before his feet, crying, day and night, “ Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty !” Such thoughts as these should possess our minds when we say, *Our Father who art in heaven*. Think of his goodness and his greatness when you pray. Take care to lift up your hearts to heaven when you pray to him who dwells in heaven, or else your prayers will never reach his throne.

II. *Hallowed be thy name !* This is the first petition ; and is placed first, to shew us that our first and chief desire should be *that God may be glorified* ; for that is the meaning of it. The name of God signifies God himself ; as he is pleased to make himself known to us by his names and titles, his words and works : for as a man is known to us by his name, so God has made himself known to us in the Gospel. There all his glorious perfections shine and unite. There he shews himself “ a just God and a Saviour.” Now, to *hallow* God’s name, is to *sanctify* it ; to hold it sacred ; for to sanctify any thing is to set it apart from every profane and common use. In this petition, then, we pray that God would enable us to glorify him in all things whereby he makes himself known. We must glorify him in our *hearts*, by high, holy, reverent thoughts of him. We must glorify him by our *tongues*, by always speaking of him in the most serious manner. We must glorify him in all our actions ; not only by acts of solemn worship, but by the most common actions of life ; for, whether we eat or drink, all should be done with a view to the glory of God.

Now, how dreadfully far from this are many who say this prayer, and who no sooner get up from their knees, than they profane and blaspheme this holy name. Think of his, *you who curse and swear*, or take the Lord’s name in vain. *When you say, in a thoughtless manner, God bless*

us ! O God ! O Christ ! &c. is this to *hallow* the name of God ! Leave off praying, or leave off swearing : for they cannot agree together.

But let every one that fears God, remember, that the glory of God is the first and chief thing that we are to ask for, and to desire, and see, even before our own good. Now, that we and others may do this, we are taught, in the next place, to pray,

III. *Thy kingdom come !* Now this does not mean the kingdom of God's providence, which rules over all ; this cannot be said to *come*, for it is come already, and will never cease ; but it means that *spiritual* kingdom which Christ came to set up in the world. That kingdom of the Messiah, which the pious Jews had long expected, and which, when this prayer was given to the disciples, was said to be *at hand*. This kingdom of Christ did come soon after. It was set up when Christ ascended to heaven, and the Spirit descended from it. But still the prayer is as necessary as ever ; for we pray that this kingdom may be established in our own hearts, and extended to all the world.

The kingdom of Christ is erected on purpose to destroy the kingdom of Satan. The devil has usurped a dominion over all mankind ; and though he does not now possess the bodies of men, as once he did, yet he " ruleth in the hearts of the children of disobedience," who are " led captive by him at his will ;" and in some parts of the world he is still worshipped as God. Now, in order to destroy this infernal kingdom, Jesus Christ came into the world ; he overcame Satan in all his attempts to seduce him ; and on the cross he spoiled principalities and powers, and conquered when he fell ; he deprived Satan of his power, and led captivity captive. Wherever he sends his gospel, he proclaims liberty ; and wherever he gives his grace to any person, there Satan is dethroned : and being made willing to submit to Christ, the believer is translated out of Satan's kingdom of sin and darkness into the holy and happy kingdom of God's dear Son.

Now when we say, *Thy kingdom come*, we pray that the *light, power, liberty, and glory* of Christ's spiritual kingdom may be more fully experienced in our own hearts,

more fully established in our own souls. For as one observes—"In *worship* we pay our homage to God. In the *word*, we come to learn his laws. In the *sacraments*, we renew our oaths of allegiance. In *almsgiving*, we pay him tribute. In *prayer*, we ask his leave; and *praise* is our rent to the great Lord, from whom we hold our all."

Thus also we express our souls' desire for our poor fellow sinners. Deeply affected with the state of Heathens, Jews, Mahometans and wicked Christians, we pour forth our souls in holy longings for their conversion, earnestly desiring the joyful day when it shall be said—"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." Rev. xi. 15.

IV. *Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.* God, the glorious maker of the world, has a right to govern it. His will is the proper rule of his creatures' actions; and it is obeyed by them all, except men and devils. God has made known his will to us in his word. The law of the ten commandments shews what obedience he requires of us; but, as fallen creatures, we have rendered ourselves incapable of perfect obedience to it, and so of obtaining life by it. God has graciously given to us the law of faith, or the gospel of salvation by Jesus Christ; and this is his commandment, that we should "believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another." But the natural man refuses obedience to this also; he is either unconcerned about salvation, or dislikes the way of it; and while he remains in this state, he cannot do the will of God in any respect acceptably, for "without faith it is impossible to please him." In short, "the carnal mind is enmity against God;" the will of the flesh is directly contrary to the will of God; but it accords with the will of Satan, sinners being "led captive by him at his will."

How necessary then is this petition—*thy will be done!* And it includes, 1. *A desire to know it*; as the Psalmist prays (143. 10.) "Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God;" or, as converted Saul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do;" 2. *A heart to do it*; a heart on which God has written his laws. I remember a person who told me, when he was teaching his child to say this prayer, and

came to this petition—"thy will be done," the child refused to say it, and would have it "*my* will be done." This poor simple child was far more honest than many of us, who say *thy* will be done, and yet determine to follow our own will: but the real Christian's desire is, "O that there were such an heart in me, to fear God, and to keep all his commandments always!" Deut. v. 29. We pray also, 3. *For strength* to do the will of God: for "*to will*" may be present, and yet how to perform that which is good we may not find; but, knowing that the Lord worketh in his people both *to will* and *to do*, we hereby pray that he would "make us perfect in every good work, to do his will; working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ. This petition also includes holy submission to the will of his providence, however afflictive, and that we may learn to bear it without murmuring, knowing that it is his will, and for our good.

Now, we pray for grace to do all this, in imitation of the spirits of just men made perfect, and of the sinless angels in heaven. "God's will is done *in heaven*." The angels that excel in strength do his commandment: hearken to the voice of his word: they do it humbly, cheerfully, diligently, constantly; and so do glorified saints in heaven, "for there his servants shall serve him." So let it be *our* meat and drink, to do the will of our heavenly Father, and to bear Christ's yoke, which is easy: and his burden, which is light.

V. *Give us this day our daily bread.* This petition implies our dependence on God for food, and all the support and comforts of life. Man, as a fallen creature, has forfeited the good things of this life, and deserves to be deprived of them all. The earth was cursed for man's sake, therefore in sorrow and labour he eats of it; but it is through the goodness of God that he has power to labour; that rain from heaven and fruitful seasons are even granted. It is "he who gives us our corn, and wine, and oil:" and, though the poor man works hard for his daily bread, it is no less the gift of God. To him also we owe the appetite that makes our food pleasant, and the power of digestion that makes it nourishing.

Moderation in our desires is here expressed. We are not taught to ask for riches and honours; they are often the destructive snares of those who possess them; but we may lawfully ask for food and raiment, "for our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of all these things;" ver. 22; and having these, we ought to be content.

We are not to ask for *weekly* bread, or *monthly* bread, or *yearly* bread; but for *daily* bread; for we must not boast of to-morrow, or depend on future years; but live in daily dependence on God, without anxious cares for a future time. "Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof;" and sufficient for the day is the good thereof; so that we are to exercise ourselves in daily prayer, and receive every mean, and every morsel, as the gift of a good God, which will make it sweeter.

The Christian will also ask for bread for his soul as well as his body. Christ is to the believer's soul what food is to the body. He is "the bread of life;" and if we are born of God, we shall daily desire, to feed upon him in our hearts, by faith, with thanksgiving.

VI. *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.* This petition is joined to the last by the word *and*, which may teach us, that without the forgiveness of sins, the comforts of this life can do us no real good; "for what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Every man is a sinner. There is not a creature who wants daily bread, that does not also want daily pardon; and yet how few are sensible of it! Sin is here compared to a debt. There is a debt of *duty* we owe to God; and, in case of failure, we contract a new debt to the justice of God. The debts we owe to man expose us to misery here; but the debts we owe to God expose us to eternal misery; for "the wages of sin is death." And be it remembered, we are not able to pay a single farthing of this debt; if ever we are delivered from going to the prison of hell, it must be by a free pardon, for so we here pray—"forgive us our debts;" or, as it is elsewhere, "forgive us our trespasses." God will take no composition. We can make no amends. It is not taking care not to contract a new debt that will discharge an old one; *this will not do* with our neighbours, nor will it do

with God. Free forgiveness alone will prevent our punishment. But be it carefully observed, that though a sinner justified freely, it is only "through the redemption that is in Christ." It costs us nothing; but it cost him dear. And it is only through faith in his blood that we can receive it. With believing and penitent hearts we must go to God by Jesus Christ, and plead for his mercy for Christ's sake. At the same time we are here taught what is the true disposition of a gracious soul—a forgiving temper—"as we forgive our debtors;" that is, as we forgive those who have injured us in our property, person, or name. Not that our kindness to another deserves forgiveness at the hand of God; but that, as we cannot expect pardon from God, while we refuse it to those who ask us for it, we may humbly hope, that if we are enabled by grace to forgive others, God, whose thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours, will not reject our prayer for pardon and mercy through Jesus Christ.

VII. *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* Those whose sins are forgiven will be afraid of sinning again; and, knowing the power of temptation, will pray to be kept from it. Now *temptation* is any thing which makes *trial* of us, and proves what is in our hearts. Afflictions are God's trials of us, for our good; but all Satan's temptations are to lead us into evil. The person who uses this prayer aright is afraid of sin; knows the plague of his own heart; the power of his corruptions; the snare of the world; and the devices of the devil; and he offers up this petition to God, that he would keep him out of the way of such trials as would be too hard for him, or grant sufficient strength to resist and overcome the devil; "*the evil one*;" the wicked one; the great tempter, who "goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. But this must be accompanied with *watching*, and avoiding all wilful occasions of sin, or else words do but mock God.

VIII. The conclusion of the prayer is—*For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.* This shews why we should pray to God; and why we may hope to be heard. The *kingdom* is his. God is king of all the world, and has a right to dispose of all things in it. The *power* is his, as well as the authority; whatever our wants are, he can supply them; whatever our enemies

can subdue them. He therefore *can* answer our ; and as a loving father we hope he *will*. His will be the *glory*. Whatever God does is for his own and if we are disposed to give him all the glory of : does for us, we may hope that our petitions will ed. This kingdom, this power, this glory, are *for* e will never want the power to help ; and if we ed, we shall never cease to give him praise. force of the whole prayer lies in the *first* and *last* of it—*Our Father*, and *Amen*. In the *first*, we ap- God in Christ, as reconciled to us ; in the *last*, we seal to the whole, and say *Amen* : *so let it be* ; so ably hope, *it shall be* for Christ's sake.

PLICATION.—How awfully is this prayer abused ! it people use it as a kind of charm ; and think it to say the words, without considering the mean- beware, as you love your souls, of mocking God by less praying. Can you call *him* a father, while you e devil ? Will you say “ hallowed be thy name,” you profane it daily ? What do you care for *his* m, while you belong to another ! or talk of God's will : wishing to do it ? Do you not forget him when and drink ? Are you not careless about the forgive- your sins, adding daily to the dreadful debt ; and : living in malice and wrath ? How can you pray ed will not lead you into temptation, when you run r into the way of it ; frequenting the alehouse, the use, the fair, the wakes, and the company of the re profane, and the drunken ? Dear fellow-creature, me to say, that thus contradicting your prayers by fe, you cannot expect to be heard : nay, God may ay to you at last, “ Out of thine own mouth will I in thee, thou wicked servant.” But God forbid ! over this prayer before you use it again ; and beg l to enable you to use it with understanding and sin- that the rich blessings asked for in it may be yours, od be glorified in your everlasting salvation. se who are “ born of God,” and have “ the spirit e and supplication,” teaching them to pray, will not : themselves at all times to these words ; yet they used with great comfort and edification. God is

your father ; he is more disposed to give than you to ask ; plead that dear relation. Let his glory be your first desire ; the increase of his kingdom your highest wish. Let his will be done in love, by saints below as well as those above : then fear not to depend on his providence for daily supplies. "There is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared ;" and he that is for us is greater than he who is against us. Though surrounded with snares, his sheep are in his hand ; and they shall be kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation. Then shall prayer be turned into praise ; and all the ransomed of the Lord shall unite in full chorus, and say,—“Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen, and Amen.”

SERMON XV.

THE DANGER OF FORMALITY AND HYPOCRISY.

Matt. vii. 21.—Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven ; but he that doeth the Will of my Father, which is in Heaven.

WE have before us an eternal world, in which there are but two states, the one inexpressibly happy, the other inconceivably wretched ; and in one of these each of us must very soon be fixed.—But, *in which ?*—Is it possible we can be indifferent about knowing in which, when an hour, a moment, may place us in one of them ? Perhaps you will say, How can a person know ? I answer, it may be known ; clearly known by the word of God ; for in the scriptures the characters of saints and sinners are exactly drawn. It is plainly laid down who shall go to heaven, and who shall go to hell ; and having this rule, we are often exhorted to try ourselves by it ; “to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith ; and thus “to make our calling and election sure.” The words of the text are of this nature : and you will remember that they are the words of Jesus Christ, who is to be our judge : so that the same lips, which declared this to us, will pronounce upon each of us the sentence of life or death. O that we may now learn, what all *the world* shall then learn, that true religion does not con-

ist in words, or professions of regard to Christ, or in gifts, or zeal, or usefulness; but in doing the will of God from the heart.

I. We learn from these words, that *at the great day here will be an earnest desire in many to enter into the kingdom of heaven.* By the "kingdom of heaven" is sometimes intended the kingdom of grace in the church of Christ on earth; but here it means the state of glory above, where Jesus shall reign in all his divine glory, and all his subjects enjoy perfect bliss. That this is referred to appears from the next verse—"Many will say unto me *in that day*, Lord, Lord." In *that day*; it is not said in *that day*: nor was there any need to say what day; for all the disciples of Christ know what is meant by it. They are often thinking on that day, when they shall "see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great glory;" "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with all his mighty angels in flaming fire." This is called *the great day*; a day of the greatest grandeur, a day of the greatest joy, and a day of the greatest terror. It is also called *the day of the Lord*, and *the day of Christ*. This is *man's day*; yea, the *devil's day*; when sinners triumph, and Satan reigns; but the triumph of the wicked is short, and the prince of this world shall be judged.

O how careless are most people now about this great day. Scoffers abound in these latter times, and say, 'Where is the promise of his coming?' Now and then, indeed, a just concern has prevailed for a season; as under John's ministry, "the kingdom of heaven suffered violence, and all men were for pressing into it." When a nation has been frightened by an earthquake or a plague, multitudes have been alarmed for a while. A few years ago thousands followed Mr. Whitefield into the open fields to hear the word; and we have read of great awakenings in America and other places. O that we could now, see the same! O that now when the judgments of the Lord are abroad in the earth, this sinful nation would learn righteousness.

But O, how will it be when the day comes? How will it be *when the trumpet shall sound*? What terror will *vex the heart of the wicked man*? Ay, he will say, Is the

dreadful day come at last; the day I so often heard of, so often laughed at! O my folly! O my vain and hurtful lusts! For what have I lost my soul! For the sake of my business, my pleasures, my companions, I have lost my soul, my heaven, my all. O that I never had been born! But, perhaps, recovering himself a little, he may say—Am not I a christian; was I not baptized and confirmed, and did I not take the Sacrament? Lord, Lord, open to me; but it will be too late; the door is shut: many will *then* seek to enter in, but shall not be able. The judge will *profess unto them, I never knew ye; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.* And this leads us to observe in the next place, that,

II. *A mere profession of religion will then be found insufficient.* The judgment of men carries it now; but it is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment. Man looks only at the outward appearance, but the Lord searcheth the heart; and he will then make the result of his search public. The young man may now rejoice in his youthful lusts and pleasures: he may walk in the ways of his heart, and in the sight of his eyes; but let him know, and O that he may consider it, that "for all these things, God will bring him into judgment." Eccles. xi. 9. Yea, God will bring every *secret thing* into judgment; what is spoken in the ear in the closet shall be proclaimed on the house-top; and then shall the secrets of all hearts be made manifest. Then shall many that were first be last; and many that were last shall be first. Then shall the hypocrites be detected and exposed. Then shall a separation be made between the tares and the wheat; between the sheep and the goats; between the foolish and the wise virgins. Then shall he say to poor vain formalists, *I never knew you, &c.* But let us more particularly examine the pretensions of these people.

• It should seem that they used *to pray*; they used to say, *Lord!* It is certainly a bad sign for any one that he does not pray; and it is generally a good sign when a person does pray; but it is not a certain sign of grace. "The wicked sometimes pour out a prayer when God's chastening is upon them." Afflictions will sometimes extort prayers and vows, and many duties of religion; but when the

affliction is over, there is an end of their devotion ; and they return to their sins, as the dog to his vomit. So there may be transient convictions of sin, and terrific fears of hell, especially in the time of sickness and apprehension of death ; and these may lead not only to a temporary reformation, but to doing many things, as Herod did when he heard John gladly, and as numbers of persons in popish countries who do penance for their sins ; but there may be all this, and much more, while men remain workers of iniquity.

Again, these people appeared to be *zealous* in religion, as the repetition of the word, *Lord, Lord*, seems to intimate ; and we find in the next verse, that they “ prophesied in the name of Christ.” Most of the prophets, especially the stated prophets, were “ holy men ;” but some especially of the occasional ones, as Balaam, Saul, and Caiaphas, were wicked men. So were *some* of the first preachers of Christianity : and so are *many* now. This is an awful word for the carnal clergy of any church, and wicked preachers of any denomination ; and it shews that zeal for religion is no proof of sincerity in it.

These men did more still :—“ they cast out devils in Christ’s name.” When Christ was upon earth, and for some ages after, the devil was permitted to possess the bodies of men ; but Christ and his apostles were able to cast them out ; and so did common Christians for a long time after, by the mention of his name. But this and other extraordinary gifts were not confined to real Christians ; wicked professors sometimes did it, and here, we see, boasted of it, and pleaded it ; but the plea is not admitted. Other “ wonderful works” they also did ; for so the Lord permitted, in order to promote the spread of Christianity ; but what availed all this, while the devil was not cast out of their own hearts, and the wonderful works of God’s grace had never been wrought in their own souls ? Men may be famous and useful in the church, yet, after all, be “ castaways.”

These people also professed obedience to Christ ; they called him Lord. He is “ Lord of all.” He has all power in heaven and earth ; and to him every knee shall bow. But it is to no purpose to call him Master, and

Lord, if we do not the things which he commands. Christ is not deceived by compliments, and he will reject that false devotion which consists only in words. "Saying and doing are two things, often parted in the conversation of men. He that said *I go Sir*, never stirred a step." Matt. xxi. 30.

Now, notwithstanding all the professions of these people, it appears, from the words of Christ himself, that they were *workers of iniquity*. They loved sin, they lived in sin, they made a trade of sin; it was their calling and business, at which they daily worked, as a man at his proper trade. All this they did under the mask of religion, and are therefore rejected. *Depart from me, I never knew you.*

Observe here, my friends, the deceitfulness of sin, and the deceitfulness of the heart. Though these formal professors lived in sin, and must know they did so, yet they continued to depend on their outward forms, and to approach the bar of God with a lie in their right hands. Alas! how many deceivers live and die deceived, and their fatal mistake is never detected till it is past remedy! Just like the Jews of old, to whom St. Paul thus speaks, Rom. ii. 17. "Behold thou art called a Jew, and reatest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes; which has the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law." These outward things the Jews rested in, presumed upon, and were proud of; while they were ignorant of the spiritual design of their own rites; and many of them so wicked, that "the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles" by their sins. They were strangers to that important distinction which the apostle makes, ver. 28, 29, of that chapter, where he says, "He is not a Jew, which is one *outwardly*; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the *flesh*; but he is a Jew, which is one *inwardly*; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God." Thus, you see, there is a great difference between *outward* and *inward* religion; between the religion of form, and

the religion of the heart. What circumcision, sacrifices, and the temple, were to the Jews of old, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and public worship, are to professing Christians now; and as the ignorant Jews put their trust in their church privileges, so many nominal Christians now; but if this be all, their praise will be, not of God, but of men only.

This is evident from our text, in which a claim on Christ, founded on these things is rejected. *I never knew you*; that is "I never esteemed or approved of you as my true disciples and servants; nor will I own or accept you as such. Depart from me: I now banish you from my blessed and glorious presence to everlasting misery and despair, O all ye wilful transgressors." How dreadful will that word *Depart* be! How did Peter dread the thought of departing from Christ, when, many of his disciples having forsaken him, he said to the Apostles, "*Will ye also go away?*" Peter, in the name of the rest, replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go; thou hast the words of eternal life." A holy soul dreads the idea of departing from Christ by apostacy; but how terrible will it be, to hear the great Judge command us to depart! God grant that now we may depart from all iniquity. If there be any iniquity in us which we know not, merciful Saviour, discover it to us, and deliver us from it; and never let us hear thee say, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." We now proceed to the last and most pleasing part of our subject, and observe, in the

III^d. place, *That all true and obedient believers will be admitted into the heavenly kingdom.* Here is our Lord's description of them, of every one of them; *He that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.* The will of God cannot be known but by his word. The scriptures are given us on purpose that we may know his will; and there are two principal things in the scriptures, namely, what we are to *believe* concerning God, and the *duty* which he requires of us; or, in other words, *Faith* and *Practice*; and both these are equally necessary; for we can never do the will of God in holy obedience without first believing in God through Jesus Christ; the whole of the Christian religion consisting in this, *faith, which worketh by love.*

SERMON XVI.

THE PHARISEE AND PUBLICAN.

Luke xvi. 16.—God be merciful to me a sinner.

THERE is a time approaching, when **MERCY** will appear to all mankind the most valuable thing in the world. Figure to yourselves the awful hour, when you shall be about to quit this mortal state, and launch into an unknown world; realize the still more awful moment, when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised; when the great white throne shall be erected, and the assembled world shall appear before the universal Judge; when the grand separation shall be made between the righteous and wicked; the one being placed at the right hand, the other at the left of Christ—then, my friends, then will the full value of *mercy* be known. O what a word will *mercy* be then; a world for *mercy* then! “Vessels of mercy,” obtainers of mercy—how will they shout and sing, “O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.” While others, in all the bitterness of fruitless woe, shall cry, O that we had but known the need of mercy, the way of mercy, and the value of mercy, while it might have been had! But now the door is shut; the mercies of God are clean gone for ever, and he will be favourable no more.

With this amazing scene in prospect, let us address ourselves to the text, and to the parable of the Pharisee and Publican, of which it is a part. The *introduction* to it, and the *conclusion* of it, will be the best key to its true meaning. Ver. 9. “Our Saviour spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.” Here are two bad things in their character. 1. *They trusted in themselves*—which no man can do, if he knows the holy law of God; and 2. *They despised others*, which we cannot do, if we know our own hearts. The conclusion shews how God dislikes such people, while he accepts a poor dejected sinner; for “every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” Ver. 14.

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican." Ver. 10. The Pharisees were a sect of people in those days in high repute for religion; they separated themselves from others, as if more holy: they distinguished themselves by peculiar zeal for ceremonies: but many of them were rank hypocrites, neglecting the religion of the heart, and indulging themselves in cruelty and oppression. The Publican also appeared at the same place, at the same time, and on the same errand; but how different their characters! Had we seen them both together, we should perhaps have thought far better of the Pharisee than of the Publican; "for man looketh only at the outward appearance, but God looketh at the heart." Very different motives brought them here. The Pharisee came because it was a public place, and he wished to be seen and admired; the Publican came because it was "a house of prayer," and he wanted to pour forth his soul before God. Thus, my friends, in all our places of worship there is a mixture of characters; but let us remember, God is the searcher of the heart, and he knows what brings us to his house.

Ver. 11. "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself:"—he stood *by himself*, with great formality, in a place where the people must notice him; he prayed thus *with himself*, and *to himself*, not to God: Ah, Sirs, there are many people who pray to themselves; they speak not to God; their words never reach him; they utter sounds, but not desires; this praying will do no good. It is remarkable, that in all the Pharisee's prayer there is not one petition: he came to pray; but surely he forgot his errand, for he asks nothing. Praise to God is certainly a proper and a noble part of prayer; but though he pretends to praise, he only boasts. But let us hear his fine prayer; "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." What is this but ignorance, pride, and censoriousness? Besides, he begins his prayer with a lie. He was as other men are, for all men are sinners; in this respect all are on a level; *there is no difference*, as the Scripture speaks, Rom. iii. 22, 23. It is true that some men are restrained from sins that others commit; but the seeds of every sin are *by nature in the heart* of every man; and if we have

not actually committed them, we owe it to the restraining power or the changing grace of God. The Pharisee seems to admit of this, by saying, "God, I thank thee;" but we have reason to doubt his sincerity in so saying; and to think they were words of course and form; for so proud a heart as his could not be duly sensible of his obligations to divine grace; and there are many, who, like him, use words of praise, but feel no gratitude to God. His meaning was probably this, "O God, thou Author of my being, I thank thee for the noble powers with which thou hast endowed me, by my own wise and careful improvement of which I have kept myself from being so wicked as other people."

You will observe, that there were two principal parts of the law; the one respected morals, the other ceremonials. Now the Pharisee takes care to brag of his regard to both; and first, to the moral law, *I am not as other men are*—well, what are other men? Why, according to his account, it should seem that most other men are *extortioners, unjust, adulterers*. At all times there are too many such people as these; but his way of mentioning them was merely for the purpose of exalting himself and his own sect, some of whom were equally criminal, though under the mask of religion. It may be the Pharisee was not an "extortioner,"—did not cruelly oppress his neighbour; but we have Christ's authority for it, that the Pharisees were generally "covetous," and some of them "devoured widows' houses." He says he was not "unjust"—not a knave, or a cheat: but could he say he had never coveted his neighbour's goods? for this is heart-robbery in the sight of God. He says he was not an "adulterer;" it may be so; but our Lord says, that "he who looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart." Matt. v. 28. But this was the folly of such men; they washed the outside of the cup and the platter, but *within* they were "full of extortion and excess; righteous without, but full of hypocrisy and iniquity within;" so Christ declares, Matt. xxiii. 26, &c.

Not content with boasting of himself, he must abuse the *poor publican*.—"I am not as this publican." What business had he with the publican? He ought to have rejoiced

to see him in the temple ; he might have hoped it was a symptom of his reformation. He should have gone and shook hands with him, and given him some good advice. But his proud heart spurns at the broken-hearted sinner ; just as modern Pharisees who look upon mourning souls as poor canting, whining hypocrites, far beneath their notice. There was a great deal of cruelty in this ; he could not say his own prayers, without putting in a caveat, as it were, against the petition of his poor neighbour.

But the Pharisee has yet more to boast of. He had not only "done nobody any harm," as the vulgar phrase is, but he had been mighty religious ; he kept *Lent all the year*. *I fast*, said he, *twice a week*. Occasional fasting, in order to humble ourselves before God for our sins, is very commendable, whether by private persons or public bodies ; but the Pharisee's fasting was not for that purpose, but for ostentation, and with a view to merit at the hand of God, as appears by his boasting of it. Beside this, he tells God, *he gave tithes of all he possessed* ; not only of what the law of Moses required, but of the herbs in his garden ; he devoted a tenth part of all he had to religious uses, whether titheable or not by the law.

Thus you have the Pharisee's prayer ; a prayer which God rejected ; for though he justified himself, God did not justify him. And now, my friends, let us examine ourselves. Is there nothing of the Pharisee's spirit in us ? Do we not hear people speaking the same language sometimes ? Is not this all the hope of some persons, that they never did any person harm ; that they pay every one his due ; and perhaps that they go to church constantly, behave decently ; take the sacrament, give alms ; and so on ? How often do we hear this language on a dying bed ? Poor ignorant souls rush into the presence of God with no other foundation for their hope than the Pharisee had ; while we hear not a word of true humility, poverty of spirit, sense of sin, or hope in Jesus, as the sinner's only friend and hope. O sirs, beware of resembling the Pharisee. Please like his may please men, but they will not succeed with God : rather let us resemble the poor broken-hearted Publican, whose character and prayer we next consider.

V. 13. "And the Publican, standing afar off, would

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not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me, a sinner !" By a *publican* you are not to understand the keeper of a public-house, but a tax-gatherer. The Jews were, at this time, subject to the Roman emperor, and paid him taxes, which were sometimes farmed by the rich publicans, who, in the execution of their office, were too often dishonest and oppressive ; on account of which, and on account of the taxes themselves, which were vexatious to the Jews, the name of a publican was abominable, and was classed with those of harlots and sinners.

Whether this publican was an extortioner, or not, we cannot say. Doubtless he was a sinner ; and by some means or other he became a convinced sinner, a penitent sinner, and a praying sinner. Perhaps this was the first time that ever he prayed in his life ; for sinning generally keeps men from praying. It is plain that the Spirit of God had humbled his heart ; and he was one of those blessed men, who are " poor in spirit," and he was one of those blessed mourners, who " shall be comforted."

Observe his posture—he *stood afar off*—at a great distance from the holy place, where the priest officiated ; he knew this became him, for he had lived at a great distance from God as a sinner ; and he knew he deserved that God should for ever behold him afar off.

Observe also his dejected looks, he could not look up ; he thought it would be presumptuous in him to lift up his eyes to heaven, the habitation of God's glory. Other sinners have thought the same ; David says, Ps. xl. 12. " Innumerable evils have compassed me about ; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up ;" but those downcast eyes attracted the eyes of God ; he could not lift up his eyes, but he lifted up his heart ; and there is no beauty in the sight of God greater than blushing for sin. " For to this man will I look," saith the Lord, " even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Is. lxxv. 2.

Another mark of his repentance was his *smiting his breast* ; he knew his heart ; he did not think it a *good heart*, as some very ignorant people speak ; no, he knew the

plague of his heart; he knew it was the seat and source of all his sins, and by smiting on his breast he seemed as if he would take revenge upon his own wicked heart; it expresses his indignation against himself, and the vehemence of his anger against sin. Men and brethren, what do you know of such a disposition as this? When were you thus angry with yourselves, and filled with shame and confusion of face because of your sins? Know this, that such is the temper of all who are taught of God; and if you have never felt in this manner, you are yet strangers to true repentance.

Now we come to his prayer. It was very short, but very good: no man ever offered a better, or to better purpose. Not that the mere words are of any avail: too many people use such words profanely, when they say, on a surprise, God bless us! or Lord have mercy on us; but such praying as this is the way to get a curse, not a blessing. When the Publican said, God be merciful to me, a sinner, he felt what he said: he felt he was a perishing sinner, and he felt an earnest desire for mercy.

He calls himself, *a sinner*, or *the sinner*, as some would render it, or *the chief of sinners*, as Paul called himself. The word *sinner* was a term of reproach among the Jews, and seemed to be applied chiefly to a harlot, or some notorious offender; but the Publican takes it to himself. It is very likely he spake this aloud in the hearing of the Pharisee, and others who did not think themselves sinners; for he was not unwilling to appear before men what he well knew he was before God. He would not have been angry with that sort of preaching which lays men low; nor would he have been displeased with a friend who should have said, you are a very great sinner. But say, my friends, what would *you* think of a person who shall charge *you* in that manner? Would you not be very angry, and say I am no worse than others: but a true penitent can never find words sufficient to express the sense he has of his vileness.

If we know the meaning and extent of the Ten Commandments, we shall say after each of them, "Lord, have mercy upon us!" And if we see any thing of the holiness, majesty, and glory of the great God, we shall cry,

with Isaiah, "Woe is me, for I am undone;" or with Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." No person truly enlightened will say, as many have done, I am not a great sinner; for, in fact, there cannot be a little sinner, unless there were a little law to break, a little God to offend, and a little wrath to incur. It is too common for persons to comfort themselves with the idea that they are not such great sinners as some others; many dying people do this, and even wretches at the gallows have done so. But this is very absurd; for the question is, not whether we have sinned as much as others, but whether we have sinned at all; that is, whether we have broken the holy law of God! If so, we are sinners, and stand exposed to the just wrath of the Most High; nor can we escape it but by partaking of that great mercy for which the Publican prayed.

You will next observe, that his sense of sin and danger put him upon prayer. Many people live without prayer; and what is the reason? They do not feel the need of mercy; for this is the first thing a convinced sinner prays for; and it is a good sign of grace, when a desire for mercy sends a man to his knees. Angels rejoice on such an occasion, and point to the new born soul, saying, "Behold, he prayeth!" My friends, do you pray for mercy? If not, how can you expect it; and what must become of you without it; O that you may begin to pray!

This poor man cried to the Lord; and whither can a creature fly for help but to God? He is our maker; he is our governor; he is our just judge; he is able to save or destroy: he is offended with our sins, yet is he most gracious, and ready to forgive. How reasonable, then, that a guilty, helpless sinner, ready to perish, should apply "to him, that is able to save to the uttermost all who come to him by Jesus Christ."

He begs for MERCY. What is mercy? We know what it is by our own feelings. It is compassion to the miserable; it is a disposition to pity and relieve the distressed; and we never speak of *mercy* but with reference to *misery*. *It is not*, then, a light unfeeling use of solemn words, *that can encourage us to hope for mercy*: it is not saying,

without feeling, Lord have mercy upon us ! Christ have mercy upon us ! but it is coming with the Publican's spirit, with his broken heart, with his remorse, with his desires, and in earnest prayer claiming this precious blessing.

Observe, it is *mercy* he asks. Here is not a word of *merit*. Mercy and merit are opposite things. The Pharisee's prayer was a mere boast of meritorious deeds ; the Publican has nothing to plead ; nor does he ask for wealth, or honour, or pleasure ; his heart is dead to these ; all his desires centre in one, and that one is mercy.

“Mercy, good Lord, mercy I ask,
This is the total sum ;
For mercy, Lord, is all my suit ;
O let thy mercy come !”

But the petition, *be merciful*, includes something more than is commonly understood by it ; the word translated *merciful* has respect to the atonement made by blood ; to the sacrifices offered up at the temple ; which were types of Christ, “ whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood.” Rom. iii. 25. At the temple, in the court of which the Publican stood, there was a lamb offered every morning at nine o'clock, and every evening at three ; and these were the hours of prayer ; so that the pious Jews came then to pray, that by virtue of the atonement of Christ represented by blood, and of his intercession represented by the incense, their prayers might find acceptance. His prayer then was—God be propitious to me a sinner—accept the atonement in my behalf—let my soul be cleansed in the blood of Christ. In this manner, by faith in Jesus, let us seek the mercy of God. Let us not dream of mere absolute mercy. “ A God all mercy, is a God unjust.” The mercy of God cannot be bestowed without regard to his justice. Now God has glorified his justice by punishing sin in the person of our glorious Redeemer, upon whom “ he laid the iniquities of us all,” and through whom he is, at once “ a just God and a Saviour.” In this way, and in no other, can a sinner obtain mercy ; for our Lord declares, that no man cometh to the Father but by him ; and no mercy cometh to the sinner but through him ; but in his dear name we may “ come boldly

to the throne of grace, and so obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need."

Thus came the Publican, and in this way he succeeded. It was not the depth of his humility, the sincerity of his repentance, nor the fervency of his devotion, that merited acceptance; these dispositions were the gifts of God, and could merit nothing: but it was the merit of the Redeemer's precious blood, typified by the blood of lambs, which he pleaded, and which shall never be pleaded in vain. Our Lord tells us, ver. 14, "This man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other," or *not the other*; the reason of which he adds, "For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." O what a blessing! "He went down to his house justified;" there was no condemnation to him; he was accepted in the Beloved; he had passed from death to life. Happy man! he might "eat his bread with gladness, and drink his wine," or water either, "with a merry heart, for God accepted his works."

APPLICATION.—Shall we not then "go and do likewise?" Are we not sinners? Fly instantly to the throne of grace. The Lord waits to be gracious. This is the accepted time; lose it not by delay. To-morrow may be too late. Now, then, with the Publican's spirit, let each of us, cry, God, be merciful to me, a sinner!

But O beware of the Pharisee's spirit. Every man is born a Pharisee. Ask your little children why they hope to go to heaven; and if they have not been better taught, you will find their hope is, because they are not so bad as others. Would to God it were not so with grown-up persons too! But let no one dare to persist in a self-righteous course; "for he that exalteth himself shall be abased"—abased even to hell. Renounce, then, your own righteousness, as St. Paul, the converted Pharisee, did, who says, Phil. iii. 9, "What things were *gain* to me, those I counted *loss* for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but *dung*, that I may win Christ, and be found in him."

The Publican's success is a great encouragement to every sensible sinner seeking for mercy. Seek like him, and like him you shall obtain it. And O, let those who have obtained it be full of joy. "Praise the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever;" and as an evidence of having obtained mercy from God, shew mercy to men. "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."

SERMON XVII.

ZEAL FOR THE SALVATION OF SINNERS.

Romans x. 1. Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

TRUE religion consists chiefly in *love to God*, and *love to man*; and wherever one of these is found there is the other also. It was love that brought the Saviour down from the throne of glory to this mean and wretched world, that he might "seek and save those who were lost." While he lived on earth, "he went about doing good;" and when he returned to heaven, he commanded his ministers and people to follow his example, and to do good to all men as they had opportunity. The Apostles and first Christians gladly obeyed, and were very active in spreading abroad the knowledge of their gracious Master and his great salvation. Among these, St. Paul was one of the most zealous, as his great labours and affectionate writings fully testify. Our text is an expression of his strong desires for the salvation of Israel, or the Jews, who were his countrymen; and the particular reason of his anxiety about them was, because he knew they were not in the way to obtain salvation. It is true, they had a *zeal* for religion, but it was not a zeal according to knowledge. They were under a very fatal mistake, which was their seeking salvation by their own works, for "they stumbled at that stumbling stone," as, alas! many people called Christians do still. Knowing therefore their danger of being eternally *lost*, he expresses his feelings in these words—"My heart's

desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." And will you, my friends, who live in this place, permit us to say that we hope and trust we are moved by the same desire? If any person should inquire, and it is natural and proper for them to inquire, why we come here to pray and sing, and read a sermon; we humbly reply, for no other reason upon earth than this, that we may promote your salvation; that we may stir you up to consider your need of it; that we may show you, from the Gospel, the only true way of it; and that we may put you upon seeking it immediately.

We purpose to shew you from these words,

I. That serious Christians plainly see the dangerous state in which many of their neighbours are.

II. That they earnestly desire their deliverance from it.

I. We observe, that serious Christians plainly perceive the dangerous state of unconverted sinners around them. We cannot tell what the grace of God may do hereafter for the worst of men; and the conditions of some may be doubtful; but in many cases, it is too evident that men "are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity," as St. Peter said of Simon Magus: at least, so much may be discovered as fully warrants our fears on their behalf. Now this sad condition of men appears,

1. *From their living in open sin*: for indeed, "some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment;" some proclaim their sin as Sodom, and glory in their shame. St. Paul says "the works of the flesh are manifest," among which he names "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, wrath, murder, and drunkenness." Gal. v. 19. Our Saviour has directed us to judge of men by their fruits; "for every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit;" and he adds, (observe his solemn words,) "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." Matt. vii. 17. We are forced to conclude, therefore, that "if men live after the flesh, they must die;" that if they proceed in the broad road, it must be to destruction; and that "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Some men are evidently "men of the world," "servants of sin," and "captives of Satan;" such to

whom our Lord said, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." When we see persons living in sinful pleasure, we know "they are dead while they live." How can we suppose the profane swearer has the fear of God, or that the Sabbath-breaker has any regard for his soul?

2. *Carelessness about religion* is another alarming symptom of a graceless, and therefore dangerous, state. There are many who have no concern about their souls or salvation. Like Gallio, they care for none of these things. But this carelessness is as strong a proof of being in a state of nature and of wrath, as living in open sin is; for it is written, Heb. ii. 3, "How shall we escape, if we *neglect* so great salvation?" To neglect this salvation is to omit all those duties which are necessary to a profitable hearing and keeping the word preached. How many are there, who every sabbath turn their backs on the house of God, where his Gospel is preached, and spend the day in idleness and sinful pleasure! How many are there, who are able to read the Bible, but who never look into that sacred book, that they may become wise to salvation! How many are there who never lift up their hearts to God, in prayer for his teaching and his mercy! Now, how shall such escape? Those who despised the law of Moses died without mercy; but to despise the Gospel is a greater crime, and deserves a greater punishment. Those who seek not mercy now, according to the Gospel, shall never have it. "This is the acceptable time; this is the day of salvation:" if this be neglected, let poor sinners expect no more to hear of mercy though all eternity.

3. *Formality in religion* is another evidence of being in a dangerous condition. There are some, who dare not omit all religious duties, public and private; but they are like the Pharisees, "who drew nigh to God with their mouth; and honoured him with their lips, but their heart was far from him;" by many religious ceremonies "they washed the outside of the cup and platter, but within they were full of extortion and excesses." Matt. xv. and xxiii. How many say their prayers like parrots, without knowing their meaning! How many go to church only to see and be seen; and, when they come away, are full of mirth

and folly ; thinking no more of what has passed, and spending the rest of the day in worldly conversation, or amusement ! Others think, that because they belong to a good church, and have been baptized, and say their prayers, and take the sacrament, all is well with them ; while they are strangers to *heart-work* in religion ; were never alarmed on account of their sins ; never humbled for their sins ; never fled to Jesus for refuge from their sins ; and never knew any thing of that great change of heart, called, in Scripture, regeneration, or the new birth. Now, when we see our neighbours content with this poor empty form of godliness, and denying the power thereof, we cannot but be deeply concerned on account of their danger.

4. There is another thing which alarms us on their behalf ; that is, *when we see them receive, for truth, great and fundamental errors, as to the doctrine of religion.* We know it is commonly said, that it does not signify what a man believes, if he does but live a good life. But we testify against this opinion, as destructive of the souls of men. Did not the great Redeemer come into the world to enlighten it ? Is he not the great Teacher, who, by his word and Spirit, reveals the will of God for our salvation ? Has he not promised his people that they shall “ know the truth, and the truth shall make them free ? ” And has he not said that his sheep hear and know his voice, but will not follow the voice of a stranger ? How then can error be harmless ? The Scripture speaks of “ damnable heresies ” as well as damnable vices. Surely, it is of great importance that we have right views of the blessed God, as to his holiness, justice, and mercy ; that we have right views of ourselves, as fallen, guilty, helpless sinners ; and especially that we have right views of Jesus Christ, and of the nature and way of Salvation through him by faith. It was the want of these that made St. Paul use the words of our text. The Jews rejected Christ and his righteousness, and “ went about to establish their own righteousness,” ver. 3 ; thus they stumbled at Christ ; and St. Paul knew, that if they died in this state they must perish for ever : and this led him to say, “ My heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.” And this leads us to observe, in the next place,

II. That serious Christians earnestly and sincerely desire the salvation of their neighbours, whom they thus perceive to be in a dangerous state.

If love to our neighbours requires that we should pity and help them in time of sickness, poverty, or any other kind of temporal distress, how much more then should we care for his soul, and labour to prevent his eternal ruin ! All the love and politeness that worldly men show to their neighbour is for the perishing body ; while they care not for the soul, but perhaps contribute much to its eternal destruction. But if the love of God be shed abroad in our heart, the salvation of souls will be the first object we have in view, and happy shall we be, if we can in any wise be instruments in their future happiness ; for,

1. *We tremble to think of their future misery.* We know assuredly, that “ the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.” Rom. i. 18. We certainly know that all men are born in sin, and are children of wrath ; and that without an interest in Christ by faith, and a heart changed by grace, no man shall see the Lord : that the “ wrath of God abideth on every unbeliever,” and that “ he will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every man who dies in his sins,” impenitent, unpardoned, unrenewed. Now, can we think of our relations, our friends, our neighbours, being in this state, without pitying them, praying for them, and exhorting them to “ fly from the wrath to come ?” It is impossible ! If any man can, how dwelleth the love of God in him ? When our compassionate Saviour paid his last visit to Jerusalem, and from a hill beheld that great and wicked city, which, on account of unbelief, was to be destroyed in about forty years, he wept over it ; though then surrounded with a multitude, crying, “ Hosanna,” he lamented over it with tears, saying, “ If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes.” Luke xix. 42. And may not we be permitted, with some small portion of the same love and compassion to our perishing neighbours, to say, O how happy would it be for you, now to know those things, which are necessary to your present peace and ever-

lasting salvation; lest, ere long, God should deprive you of the means of grace, and give you up to the blindness of your minds and the hardness of your hearts! It would shock us beyond measure to see one of you burning in a great fire, were it but for a few minutes; but who can think without horror of everlasting burnings? We therefore would, as St. Jude speaks, ver. 22, "save you with fear, pulling you out of the fire;" or, as St. Paul speaks 2 Cor. v. 10, 11. "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men."

2. As we wish to prevent your future destruction, so likewise we earnestly desire that you may share with us in the joys and glories of the heavenly world. We believe "there is a reward for the righteous;" that "the pure in heart shall see God;" that "in his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore." We believe that Christ is gone to heaven to prepare mansions for his people, and that in due time, they shall be with him, to behold his glory, to enter into his rest, to sit down with him on his throne, and to wear a crown of glory. We humbly hope, through Jesus, to partake of these blessings, and we would gladly take all the world along with us. We are grieved to think that any should despise the good land, slight the invitations of Heaven, or expect it on false grounds. We are grieved to think that so many cleave to the dust, and, for the sake of the short-lived pleasures of sin, and a portion in this world, are in danger of losing eternal joys. This therefore puts us upon urging you to seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, that you may also be admitted into the kingdom of glory.

3. We wish you to know and enjoy the present pleasures of true religion. Let strangers to godliness say what they please, we maintain that the ways of wisdom are pleasantness, and her paths are paths of peace. Some of us have tried both the pleasures of sin and the pleasures of religion, and we are bold to say, there is more satisfaction in one hour's communion with God, than in days and months of sinful indulgence. We can say, with David, "*A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to*

dwell in the tents of wickedness." A good hope through grace, a knowledge of the pardon of our sins, a persuasion of the favour of God towards us, a belief that all things are working together for our good, and that we shall go to heaven when we die ; together with the actual delight we find in prayer, praise, hearing, reading, and conversation with the people of God—these are joys that satisfy and sanctify the mind, and, compared to which, all the frothy mirth and carnal pleasures of the wicked are mean as the toys of children, and hurtful as the sports of madmen. We wish you therefore, brethren, to be partakers of the grace of God, and we say to you, as Moses to Hobab, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good : for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." Numb. x. 29.

4. We wish the salvation of others *on account of the glory of God*, for which we feel ourselves concerned, and which will be promoted thereby. We are taught to pray, "hallowed be thy name." Let God be glorified ! And surely, when a poor sinner ceases to be a rebel to his Maker, throws himself at the feet of mercy, and swears allegiance to the God of his salvation, the Lord is glorified. Satan loses another subject, and one is added to the kingdom of Jesus. The love of Christ constraineth us, and our loyalty to the King of heaven makes us long to see his kingdom flourish. We cannot tell of how great importance may be the value of one converted soul : a wife, a husband, the children of the family, the servants, the connexions, may all be the better for it ; the Gospel may be spread ; more souls may be converted ; and generations yet unborn may derive benefit from it. We would therefore compass sea and land to make one proselyte, not to our party, or any particular sect, but that Jesus may be exalted : "for blessed be his glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen." Ps. lxxii. 19.

5. Again, we wish for the salvation of sinners for the sake of the good of the nation where we dwell. True Christians are the salt of the earth, that keep it from perishing. Sodom would have been preserved from destruction, if ten righteous men could have been found in it. And *may we not say*, in these threatening times, "Except the Lord had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and

been made like unto Gomorrah?" Rom. ix. 29. The prayers of God's people are a greater defence to their country than all its fleets and armies: and that kingdom is most likely to flourish, in which truth and righteousness most abound.

6. To say the truth, we are not without a little selfishness in this matter: for, beside all the reasons before mentioned, *we have some view to our own peace and happiness.* We do find that "the meanest service of Christ has refreshment in it." Our good Master sends not his servants on a warfare at their own charge. He that watereth the souls of others shall himself be watered. We think the conversion of a soul to God is the greatest honour and happiness, next to our own salvation, that we can enjoy; and though we know that no man has any claim upon God for what he does, all being unprofitable servants, that the best action of man has no merit in it, yet we believe that there is a reward of grace for the faithful servants of Christ, who has promised that so small a gift as a cup of cold water given to any one, because he belongs to Christ, shall not be forgotten; and as to those whom he employs in his work, "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." Dan. xii. 3.

Let us now show in what manner a desire for the salvation of sinners ought to be expressed; for this desire, when true, will not be idle, but active, and will put persons on earnest endeavours to accomplish it; and

1. *By prayer.* The conversion of a soul, like the creation of the world, is the work of God alone. A real christian is a new creature, "born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John i. 13. St. Paul therefore, in our text, mentions, not only his "heart's desire," but "his prayer to God" also. Those who truly pray for themselves, will pray for others too. If a husband or a wife has a partner who knows not the Lord, prayer will be immediately offered. If a parent has an ungodly child, like Abraham, he will cry, O that Ishmael might live before thee! or like the poor man, Matt. xvii. 15. Lord, have mercy upon my son. Thus Job rose early in the morning, and offered up ten offerings for his ten children;

because he feared they had sinned against God in their feasts with each other.

2. *We should urge our friends to come and hear the Gospel.* Do not be ashamed to invite them to hear that word, which God has made his power to your salvation. When Christ called Andrew to be his disciple, Andrew soon invited his brother Peter; and the day after, when Christ called Philip, Philip presently findeth Nathaniel, and invites him to come and hear Jesus. So, when the Lord sent Peter to preach to Cornelius, a Roman officer, he found Cornelius had called together his kinsmen and friends, and they were all gathered together in a private house, as you may be here, to hear all things which God had commanded Peter to preach. O how many have had reason to bless God for ever, that some kind friend first invited them to go and hear a Gospel sermon! Practise this, my friends; all of you, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, say to others, "O taste and see, that the Lord is good." Sinners, as you all know, are very active to bring others into sin, and to invite them to plays and merry meetings; why should not we be more active to save souls, than sinners are to destroy them.

3. There is another way in which we should shew our desire for the salvation of our fellow-creatures, and that is *by the Christian education of Children*, our own, and our neighbour's. Abraham was commended of God for his — "I know him, said the Lord, that he will command his children and his household after him;" and parents were ordered, by the law, Deut. vi. 7, "to teach their children the words of God diligently; to talk of them when they sat down in the house, when they walked by the way, when they lay down, and when they rose up." If parents wish well to the souls of their children, they will try to inform their minds, bring them under the word, and restrain them as much as possible from sabbath-breaking and other sins. And as there are some parents who will not, or cannot, instruct their own children, let us do what we can for them. Why should one of these little ones perish, while Sunday schools may be kept up? The Lord prosper this good work more and more. And to this we may add, constant regard to *family worship*, by those who are at the head of

families. Surely, they have little regard to the souls of children and servants, who do not daily read the scriptures, and pray with their families.

• *Personal exhortation* is a great means of good to the souls of men. "Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." How often has God blessed one sentence, spoken in his fear and love? A "word spoken in season, how good is it!" O let us try, whenever we can, mildly to reprove sin; and give a hint on all proper occasions, in companies, on journeys, at work, whereby we may prove, if the Lord bless it, the instrument of our neighbour's conversion.

5. To all this, one thing more must necessarily be added, and that is, *a holy life*. Actions speak louder than words. "Let our light shine before men, that they, seeing our *good works*," as well as hearing our good words, "may glorify God." There is a testimony for God in the life of a holy man, that the wicked may despise, but cannot resist. Thus let all christians hold forth the word of life, "that so even the prejudiced, who will not hear the word, may, without the word, be won by our conversation." 1 Pet. iii. 1.

APPLICATION.—Men and brethren: Is it the duty and practice of all real Christians to be thus affectionately concerned for the salvation of others? Should you not be much more concerned for your own salvation; you, who have hitherto totally neglected it? O consider the value of your souls. Are you not sinners? And must you not soon receive the wages of your sins, unless they are pardoned for Christ's sake? And can you expect pardon without seeking it? O then be wise. Rouse yourselves from your dreadful stupidity. Cry to God for his mercy and grace, lest you perish. This is the day of salvation. To you is the word of salvation sent. O that it may not be sent in vain! Jesus Christ is a great and gracious Saviour; he was never known to reject one perishing sinner who came to him for life. Let this be an encouragement to you to apply to him, and you will find him able and willing to save to the utmost.

From what has been said, we may learn the nature of true grace, how it opens the heart, and shews itself in love to God and man. This may afford some comfort to those who fear they are destitute of it. Ask your hearts whether they do not long for the salvation of your fellow-men? and whether you do not with Christ, angels, and all good men, rejoice in their conversion? If so, it is a good evidence of grace. On the contrary, those selfish souls, who can be content to go to heaven alone, while they care not if all around them perish, while they make no one effort to rescue them from destruction; such persons have reason to fear; for if we love not our neighbour whom we have seen, how can we love God whom we have not seen?

Finally, let every serious hearer suffer the word of exhortation. See, in St. Paul, a pattern of holy zeal, and imitate it. Like him, let it be your heart's desire and prayer to God, that Israel may be saved. Look around you, and see, who is there to whom you may be useful. Consider by what means you may best advance the glory of the great Redeemer, by bringing souls to him. Remember that life is short, and all opportunities of usefulness will cease. Work then while it is day, for the night of death is coming, when no man can work. "Serve your generation according to the will of God," and then enter into the promised rest; where, with all the redeemed, you shall glorify the riches of free grace to all eternity.

SERMON XVIII.

THE PRODIGAL SON; OR THE PENITENT JOYFULLY RECEIVED.

Luke xv. 24. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

JESUS Christ came into the world to save sinners; he therefore behaved in a kind and affable manner to all, even to some who had been very great sinners. This offended the Jews, and especially the self-righteous Pharisees. *They thought that a holy prophet should have nothing to do with such bad people; not considering that he went*

among them on purpose to save them from their sins. But Jesus Christ vindicates his conduct, by appealing to the custom of men in general, who always rejoice when they recover any valuable thing that was lost. In this beautiful and affecting parable we have,

I. The prodigal's sin and folly, in departing from his father, and living in a riotous manner.

II. His repentance and return.

III. His kind reception.

IV. The envy of his elder brother upon that occasion.

I. We have the prodigal's sin and folly, v. 11—13. "A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me: and he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living."

The prodigal son is an emblem of a sinner. He disliked the restraint of his pious father. He wanted to be his own master; to live in a state of independence, and to be governed by his own corrupt judgment. The language of sinners is, "Let us break his bonds asunder, and cast away his cords from us;" they say unto God, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" Job xxi. 15. All natural men are, like the prodigal, men of the world, and want their portion in this life, regardless of a portion in heaven: and, like him, they wish to live at a distance from God, and, as much as possible "without God in the world."

But let us stop a moment, and ask whether this is not a picture of ourselves. Has not each of us, more or less, acted the same part? Is there not in us, even in us, an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God? Is not this the reason that so many forsake the house of God, even on the Lord's day—that they dislike to hear God speak to them in his preached word—that they refuse to speak to God in their prayers—and that they despise truly religious persons, who are of the family of God! Surely

all this arises from hearts "alienated from the life of God;" this is "the carnal mind," which is enmity against him.

Observe, now, how he behaves in the distant country to which he went. Probably he told his father that he would traffic with his money, and so mend his fortune; or at least, that he would travel for the improvement of his mind; but he no sooner gets this portion into his hands, and becomes his own master, than he enters upon a loose, lewd, riotous way of life, in the company of bad women and other wicked companions. Thus he *wasted* his substance, and abused the gifts of God; gave himself up to luxury and lasciviousness, "to work all uncleanness with greediness."

See the consequence of being left to ourselves; the misery of departing from God! and O, beware of wasting his gifts! Our reason, our health, our strength, our time, our money, our influence, are all talents committed to our trust; let them be used to promote the glory of God, and the salvation of our souls, and not abused to the purpose of sin and destruction.

Mark now, my friends, how certainly misery follows sin. Ver. 14. When he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Here is a proof of the truth of that old proverb—"Wilful waste, makes woeful want." See how the pleasures of sense perish in the using: for as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool;" a noisy blaze, succeeded by dismal darkness. Let this, as Solomon advises, "keep thee from the evil woman; from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman; for by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread. She hath cast down many wounded. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." Prov. vi. 24. and vii. 26.

What was become of the prodigal's gay friends? Would none who had feasted at his table come forward to supply his wants? No: they all deserted him. Place no dependence on sinful companions. Many adore the rising sun, who turn their backs upon it when it sets. And how just it is, that he, who acts as an enemy to God, should not be able to find a friend among men.

them !) who dwell in the house of the Lord ; feast upon his rich grace ; know that their sins are pardoned, and are full of peace and joy in believing."

What is the natural consequence of such a comparison? Why an effort, an immediate effort, to mend his condition. Hope springs up in his heart ; and though there was but a may-be, a mere peradventure, of success, he makes the following wise resolution ; ver. 18, 19. " I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son ; make me as one of thy hired servants."

He resolves to return to his father. Now, what is conversion, but the sinner's return to God? This is what God calls us to in his word—" Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isa. lv. 7. But with what spirit will he return? Will he feign an excuse, and go with a lie in his mouth? Will he say, " I have been very unfortunate ; I have been robbed of my property ; been deceived by swindlers ; or had a shipwreck at sea?" Or, will he plead his youth, and indiscretion, and say, " Though I have done wrong, I had a *good heart*?" Such, my friends, are the wretched excuses of unhumiliated sinners. But the prodigal now perceived the plague of his own heart ; he was " poor in spirit ;" he would make no excuses ; but his own guilt, and confess he was unworthy to be treated as a son ; he would be contented and thankful to be admitted into the kitchen or the scullery. " Make me as one of thy hired servants." Thus it will be with every true penitent ; he will give glory to God, by making full confession of his sin, and will sincerely admit that he is totally unworthy of the mercy and grace of God."

Observe ; he says, " I have sinned *against Heaven*"—against the God of Heaven : against the high authority of God, and against the wonderful goodness of God. It is a foolish and hurtful mistake of some people, when they *speak of a drunkard, or some other wicked man, to say*—" *He hurts none but himself.*" It is true, sinners hurt *themselves* ; but they also offend and provoke the God.

of Heaven; and in true repentance, the sinner, like the prodigal, and like the Psalmist will say, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." *Before thee*, said he; the prodigal had sinned against his father, by throwing off his easy yoke: and let young people remember, that disobedient and undutiful behaviour to their parents is a sin against God, that needs his pardoning mercy, and must be repented of. Think of this, children.

Shall we pause a moment—and ask ourselves, whether we find in *our* hearts a disposition like that of the prodigal. We have all *sinned* with him, but which of us *repents* with him? Depend upon it, we shall not think of returning to God, till we feel the misery of departing from him. We have forsaken God, we have set up for our own guides, we have abused the gift of God, we have been the slaves of sin; and have we not found emptiness, insufficiency, dissatisfaction, misery, and danger in this condition? If not, may God open our eyes, and help us to discover it. If we are convinced of these things, let us make the prodigal's resolution, "I will arise;" and not only make it, but execute it; for we read, ver. 19, *He arose and came to his father*. There are many good resolutions formed, which come to nothing. It has been said, that "hell is paved with good resolutions:" perhaps there is not one unhappy creature there, who did not at one time or other say, "I will arise and go to my father;" but their resolutions died away. The prodigal, however, arose, and began his journey—a long journey—for you will remember that he went into "a far country." Ah! who can tell what painful fears and doubts assailed his mind on the way? Hunger had brought him very low; and he might have said "How can these trembling limbs carry me so many miles? I must beg my way; perhaps I may die on the road: and, oh! if I live to reach the place, how can I bear the sight of the house? My father, my offended father, will refuse to see me; forbid me the house; and after all my labour, I may be rejected, and justly too. But, however, though I may perish if I go, I *must* perish if I stay. "I will arise and go to my father."—He goes. He continues his journey; and, at length, *after many a weary step, and many a toilsome day, he*

catches a glimpse of the mansion : he halts ; his heart beats ; a thousand fears rush into his mind. Ah ! what shall I do ! What shall I say ?

Just then, for so Providence ordered it, " when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." This is the

III d. thing we are to consider ; his kind reception. God's eyes are upon all his creatures. " He looketh upon men," to see if there be any that regard, any that return ; and the very first motions of the heart towards him are noticed. " He looketh upon men ; and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not ; he will deliver his soul from going down into the pit, and his life shall see the light." Job xxxiii. 28.

He had compassion. A parent can readily conceive what tender feelings would be excited by the sight of a long-lost child returning in this miserable plight ; and by these feelings the God of mercy is pleased to express his perfect readiness to receive and forgive a repenting sinner.

He ran. The prodigal, perhaps, stopped short, afraid to venture on ; but the father runs ; forgetting his age, and the gravity of his character, he runs to meet him, impatient to embrace him.

He fell on his neck, and kissed him ; though ragged, though filthy, though lately come from feeding swine. Any other than a father would have loathed ; but the parent loves, and manifests his love by his affectionate embraces.

What a wonderful display is this of the love of God ! It is thus that God presents us with the blessings of his goodness. It is thus that repenting sinners are welcomed by the God of mercy. Hear it, O my friends, hear it for your encouragement, that our God is " ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness." Nehem. ix. 17. Hear his own words ; Jer. xxxi. 18. " I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus : Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke : turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God. Surely *after that I was turned, I repented ; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh ; I was ashamed, yea,*

even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." This is the language of Ephraim's repentance. Now hear the language of God's compassion, ver. 20. "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." Yes, sirs, God, for Christ's sake, keeps mercy in store for the chief of sinners who return to him.

Now what effect had this kind behaviour on the prodigal? Did it make him suppress his intended confession? Did it prevent the humiliation he resolved upon? No; it rather increased his contrition and godly sorrow. An awakened sinner is affected and melted down with the discoveries of God's free, full, and pardoning love in Christ Jesus, it appears so great, so undeserved, and so excellent.

"Law and terrors do but harden,
All the while they work alone;
But a sense of blood-bought pardon
Soon dissolves a heart of stone."

The prodigal no sooner meets his father, than he cries, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."—He was going on; he would have said more; but the father stopped him, and *said to his servants*, who with surprise had followed him, and gathered round to behold the affecting scene,—“Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.” Ver. 22—24.

The prodigal was half naked; he is clothed, and that with a robe; the dress of a prince rather than of a servant. He had the appearance of a wretched slave; the ornaments of a free man were put upon him. He was ready to starve; the most delicate food is prepared for him. He was almost overwhelmed with grief; cheerfulness and joy now fill his heart. Thus, the lower a penitent sinks into humility, the higher will God raise him, and heap upon him the greater benefits. The reconciled sinner shall be treated as a child; *he shall be clothed with the garments of salvation, with*

the righteousness of Christ; he shall have the seal of adoption, and the graces of the Spirit enabling him to walk in the ways of God.

We have scarcely time to notice, in the fourth place, the behaviour of his ill-natured elder brother; suffice it to say, it was a picture of the Pharisees; and represents the character of many, "who value themselves on the regularity of their own conduct, and betray a strong aversion to the rich grace of the Gospel, which is extended to the greatest sinner: they are offended that no peculiar compliment is paid to their excellence, and that others whom they despised are put on a level with them." Thus Christ reproves them.

CONCLUSION.—Men and brethren: There are two things in this parable which I trust you will not forget—*the folly of sinners, and the compassion of God.* Let each one of us consider, whether he has not ungratefully run away from God—disliked his restraints—been wise in his own conceit—indulged forbidden lusts—and abused the bounties of heaven? And yet perhaps totally insensible of the evil of so base conduct. In the midst of prosperity there was not a thought of returning to God; and even in affliction trying any other method rather than that. But surely it is high time to bethink ourselves. May divine grace bring us all to ourselves, as the necessary means of bringing us to God. Let us resolve, without a moment's delay, to humble ourselves at his feet; and let us be encouraged to do so, by the affecting account we have heard of God's kindness. "He sees afar off the returning sinners; he pities, he meets, he pardons, he embraces them. He arrays them with the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness; adorns them with the ornaments of sanctifying grace; honours them with the tokens of adopting love; and invests them with all the privileges of his dear children." O that we may feel the charming force of these heavenly attractions! May there be joy in heaven and earth this day on our account! and may we, thus received into the house of God, abide there all the days of our life, admiring and adoring the sovereign, free, and everlasting grace of God: and saying, "*Behold! what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.*"

"The mighty God will not despise
The contrite heart for sacrifice;
The deep-fetch'd sigh, the secret groan,
Rises accepted to the throne.

"He meets with tokens of his grace,
The trembling lip, the blushing face,
His bowels yearn, when sinners pray,
And Mercy bears their sins away.

"When fill'd with grief, o'erwhelm'd with shame,
He, pitying, heals their broken frame;
He hears their sad complaints, and spies
His image in their weeping eyes.

"Thus, what a rapt'rous joy, possess'd
The tender parent's throbbing breast,
To see his spendthrift son return,
And hear him his past follies mourn?"

And now let us, who long have been
The wretched slaves of hell and sin,
Repent—made wiser by the rod—
Come to ourselves—and then to God.

SERMON XIX.

CHRIST THE WAY TO GOD AND HEAVEN.

John xiv. 6.—I am the way.

we believe there is a future state of happiness, called heaven, and a future state of misery, called hell, there be nothing of greater consequence to us, than that we obtain the one and escape the other. If we have any doubts or thoughts of these things, we cannot but inquire, which is the true way to heaven! Every thing that calls itself *Religion* pretends to be the way; but, as there are many different ways, they cannot all be right: yea, we are bold to say they are all wrong, except one, and that is declared in the text; "I am the way, said Jesus; man cometh to the Father, but by me." Our Lord said these words to his disciples when they were full of doubt, because he was about to leave them. He comforted them by saying he was going to heaven, his Father's house, to prepare a place for them, and that he would come again, and receive them to himself, that where he

was they also might be; and then he adds, "Whither I go ye know, and the *way* ye know." But Thomas, who was rather of a doubtful turn of mind, replied—Lord, after all thou hast said, we are still at a loss about the place where thou art going, and how then can we know the way to follow thee? Jesus answered, *I am the way*; which is as if he had said, I am the Mediator between God and man; I am the means of intercourse between heaven and earth; whatever comes from God to a sinner, comes through me; and whatever, of an acceptable kind, goes from a sinful man to God, must pass through my hands. In treating upon these very important and useful words we shall show—

I. *To what Christ is a way*; and

II. *What sort of a way he is.*

1. We are to consider, *What Christ is a way to.* Every way or road leads from some place to another; now, as he is pleased to call himself *a way* in condescension to our mean capacities, we are to consider what he is the way *from* and what he is the way *to*. We are to remember that we are fallen, guilty creatures, in a state of sin and liable to all miseries here and hereafter; and that we are far from God, from righteousness, and from heaven: now, if ever we are brought back to God and a state of grace here, and to a state of glory hereafter, it must be in and through Jesus Christ alone. We say, then, that Christ is *the way to God, and the way to heaven.*

The first of these is directly expressed by our blessed Lord in the text: *I am the way; no man cometh to the Father but by me.* When man was first created, he lived in a happy state of nearness to God; he knew God, and delighted in him as his chief good; but sin, cursed sin, soon made a dreadful separation; and now we come into the world "estranged from God, and go astray from the womb;" we desire absence from God; "he is not in all our thoughts;" but we seek happiness in sin and folly. Yet is the Lord our God pleased to invite us back to him, by the promises and blessings of *his Gospel*, and by the ordinances of his house. And *although multitudes* despise these, and madly resolve to

pursue the way of destruction, yet a happy few there are, who hear the voice of the Son of God in his word, are made sensible, that, being far from him, they must perish, and that it is good for them to draw nigh to him. But these persons have oftentimes such an awful view of the glorious and dreadful majesty of God, as an infinitely holy and just being, and of the distance that sin has occasioned, that they know not how to approach him. The prophet Micah thus expresses the anxious desires of such an one, chap. vi. 6. "Where-with shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Blessed be the Lord, "he hath shewed us what is good?" He hath given us a full answer to these inquiries in our text. Jesus is the way. It is not by costly offerings of blood or oil, nor at the dreadful expense of sacrificing a darling child; but Jesus is the way. He not only came to *show* us the way, but *to be* the way. He did not come to tell us how we may "make our peace with God," as some express themselves, but to be our peace; for "he made peace through the blood of his cross." It is by the death of Jesus that we draw near to God; so St. Peter tells us, "He suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might *bring us to God*." We were far from him; we had neither the will nor the power to return; and sin, if not atoned for, must have made an everlasting separation between a holy God and vile sinners; but Jesus, who was perfectly just and righteous, endured the most shameful and painful sufferings on the cross for us, that is, in our room and stead, that he might reconcile us to God, and bring us to a holy conformity to him, and happy communion with him here, and to the eternal enjoyment of him hereafter.

In this way, that is, in Jesus, we have free access to *the glorious Majesty of heaven*; we may, by prayer in *his name*, "come with boldness to the throne of grace,"

there to "obtain mercy, and find grace to help us." Hear what St. Paul says of this matter, Heb. x. 19, &c. "Having, therefore, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." What a glorious privilege is this! We may approach the great God, as our reconciled God and Father; we may use holy freedom with him in our prayers; we have this liberty of access by the merit of Christ's blood, and by the application of it to our consciences through faith therein. This is the way prepared for our use, even Jesus, who is "the way, the truth, and the life;" he is the truth and substance of all the ordinances of the Old Testament; with particular reference to the rending of that vail which separated the holy of holies in the temple from the holy place; and which rending took place at the moment of our Saviour's death; which signified that now the way to God and heaven is laid open for all believers; and that is the second thing proposed.

2. *Jesus Christ is the way to heaven.* This indeed follows the other; for if we come to God by Jesus as our reconciled Father, if sin be pardoned, and we are admitted to a life of holy communion with him here, it is certain that we shall also have "an abundant entrance into his heavenly kingdom and glory." Jesus died, to "redeem us to God," to his favour and image here, and to his glory hereafter. He died, to "bring many sons to glory;" that they may be satisfied with the goodness of his house, even of his holy temple; that they may be pillars in that temple, never more to go out; that they may approach him in a more sublime way of worship than at present, without the help of means and ordinances; that they may "see him face to face," without a cloud to hide his glory from them, and without the clog of sinful flesh and blood. Now Jesus is the only way to heaven. This is the record of the Gospel—"God has given to us eternal life, and *this life is in his Son.*" There it is, and no where else; and whoever thinks to get to heaven another way, misses the true road, and will be eternally disappointed. There are many ways to hell, but only one to heaven; and if Jesus be not

our way, we shall never get thither. As sinners, we have forfeited heaven and deserved hell ; but Jesus Christ has not only redeemed his people from the curse, that they may not go to hell, but by his perfect obedience, or righteousness he has procured for them *a title to heaven*. The righteousness of Christ is “ to, and upon, all ~~who~~ believe in him ;” it is transferred to them, imputed to them, or reckoned to their account, as if they had themselves performed it ; and on this ground it is that they are admitted into the realms of light and glory ; “ *therefore* are they before the throne, because they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb ;” and not on account of any goodness, virtue, or good works, of their own.

Besides this, there is *a fitness for heaven*, a meetness of disposition, and capacity of enjoyment, for that holy state, without which no man can see the Lord : for it is plain that a wicked man, a carnal man, could not enjoy heaven, were he admitted into it ; there must therefore be a change of heart, a love of God and holiness, as well as a title to glory. This also we have from Jesus Christ. We are not pardoned by his blood, and then sanctified by our own endeavours (though these also are to be used,) but “ Christ is made unto us sanctification.” It is by the spirit of Christ, dwelling and working in us, that we are renewed in the spirit of our minds ; the love and power of sin mortified ; the world, with all its vanities, crucified to us ; and we led into a spiritual life of communion with God here, as the preparation and pledge of our eternal happiness in heaven. Thus is Jesus, in every point of view, the way to heaven.

Having briefly shewn that Christ is the way to God and heaven, let us stop a moment, and ask ourselves whether we have any desire that he may be *our* way in these respects ? Are there not some who are so far from wishing to draw nigh to God, that their hearts and lives plainly say, “ Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways :” You dare not say so in words ; but your actions say so. God and sin cannot reign in the same heart ; and when you choose sin, and indulge it, you do in effect say—“ God, begone ! I hate your company, I love your enemy,

I love sin, and will submit to the devil's rule. I will have nothing to do with you. I hate prayer. I hate the Bible. I hate the saints." This is horrid language, and you like the sound of the words; but is not this the fair language of your profane cursing and swearing, of your and lewdness, fornication and uncleanness? Is not the language of your sabbath-breaking, and contempt of religious ordinances and means of grace? When you are drunk, and swear, and lie, or steal, or commit any bad action, do you not say, Depart from me, and let sin and Satan have me? O my friends, consider what will be the end of these things. You must die, and then appear before God; a holy, a just, an offended God; and should you not inquire, How may I come before him acceptably? Remember then that Jesus is the way, and O that you may be made "willing in the day of his power," to come to him for pardon and life; for "he is able to save to the uttermost, all who come to God by him."

The same may be said of Christ as the way to *heaven*. Oh! how many care nothing about heaven! "And is it supposed that any man will ever come to heaven, who never thought of it before he came thither?" No, indeed. It is "the prize set before us," and the Christian must "so run as to obtain it," and there is no way to run in, but by Jesus Christ. Most men hope to go to heaven when they die; and yet few consider whether they are in the right way. As Christ only is the way, let any person inquire when any thing is proposed to him as the way, *Is this Christ?* If men say, Good works are the way, ask, *Are good works Christ?* If they say Baptism and the Lord's supper are the way, ask again, *Are these Christ?* Is penitence Christ? Are alms Christ? This is a very easy method of coming to the truth. Christ is the way; and therefore, whatever is not Christ is not the way. Then, *only*, being the way, let us,

II. *Shew what sort of a way Christ is.*

I. Christ is a *new* way; so he is called, Heb. x. 4. Not that the way of salvation by Christ is a new invention, for he is "the lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Adam, Abel, and Abraham, went to heaven *this way*; but it is called *new*, because there was one be-

it. The first way, in which it was proposed for man to be happy, was by his own innocence and perfect obedience : and if Adam had not sinned, this would have been his way to heaven ; but as soon as he sinned, and fell, and we in him, this way was shut up for ever : so that there never was a soul got to heaven in the way of works, nor ever will. This way, by grace, came *after* the other, and instead of it, and is therefore called a new way.

It is called new, because it was *newly made*, when the New Testament was written. Jesus Christ had lately died, to become this way. It is new, because newly and more plainly revealed in Gospel times than it was before ; and because it will always be new, and never give place to any other.

2. It is a *living* way. This way to heaven was by Christ's *dying* : yet it is called a living way, because all our life springs from his death. Christ is the life of all who live spiritually or eternally. This way is trodden only by such. All who are in this way are alive to God, and, what is more, they shall never die. The eternal life of all who are in Christ, and walk in him, is secure ; for because he lives, they shall live also. No man ever died upon this road. "I am," saith Christ, "the resurrection and the life ; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."—The body indeed must die, because of sin, though that is more properly called *sleep* in the New Testament, and the body shall be raised in glory ; "but the spirit is life, because of righteousness," and shall never perish, but have everlasting life.

3. It is a *plain* way. Some ways are hard to find ; have many turnings and windings and cross-paths ; but this way is easy to find, and to keep. The prophet Isaiah, speaking of it, says, "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." Is. xxxv. 8. It is an infinite mercy, that the things which belong to our peace are not difficult. There are, it is true, deep and difficult things in the Bible ; but the grand truths which concern our salvation are perfectly plain and easy. What can be plainer than what is said about our fallen, sinful, helpless state, as sinners ? or about *Jesus Christ*, as the only all-sufficient Saviour ? or

about our duty, and saved sinners, towards God as man? It is a great blessing to poor people, that these things are so plain, and that God by his Spirit makes them so, even to "babes and sucklings;" for "the entrance of his words giveth light: it giveth understanding to the simple."

4. It is a *free* way. There are *private* ways that belong to great men, and they are open to few; it would be a trespass for a stranger to be found in them; but this is a *public* way, the king's *high-way*. St. Paul says, *it is consecrated*, that is, appointed, dedicated, devoted to this purpose, and free for the use of all who desire to travel in it. There are no bars or toll-gates, where travellers must pay for permission to enter or proceed; for salvation is "without money, and without price." Isa. lv. 1. It is a way prepared on purpose for the use of *sinners*, who are returning to God; and no objections are made to such persons. No worthiness, nor qualifications, nor conditions, are required of the traveller; whosoever will, may come and welcome. It is a free way.

5. It is a *safe* and *sure* way. It is a firm solid road, there is no danger of sinking in it, for Christ is the rock of ages. It suffers no alterations by rains and floods, as other ways do; it is passable at all times; there is nothing at any time to hinder our access to God, and progress to heaven. Nor is there any occasion to fear enemies upon it. There are such; but they cannot prevail. "The devil (says one) has been busy upon this road for about five thousand years, but yet never slew one believer; for every traveller is "kept by the power of God, through faith, to salvation." So that he may walk on with boldness, and fear no evil; rejoicing to think that every believer, that once set his foot in this way, has been enabled to proceed, and not one of them failed of "receiving the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul."

6. It is a *pleasant* way. The Scripture says "the ways of wisdom are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Satan invites men to travel in the ways of sin, under the notion of their being pleasant; and there certainly are pleasures in sin; but they are for a short season; they are *now* mingled with bitter pains and pangs of conscience, and they will issue in misery everlasting. But "the ran-

d of the Lord," who return to the heavenly Zion, all come with songs and everlasting joy upon their lips." Believers are called upon to "rejoice always in the Lord." Those who travel in this way are not only free from harm, as you have heard, but the Lord has endeared for their supply on the road; he has promised that they shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of his house, and drink of the rivers of his pleasure." They "sit under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit shall be sweet to their taste." They shall enjoy the communion of the saints as their fellow-travellers, with whom communion shall be sweet. Yea, the Lord of the universe himself has promised to bear them company, and has said "Fear not, for I am with thee;" and "I will never forsake thee."

Lastly, It is the *only* way. Many ways to God and heaven have been proposed by mistaken men, under the influence of the great deceiver, the devil: and it is too commonly supposed that *any way* will do, if a man is but sincere in it. But this cannot be true; for if any way of man's invention might suffice, what occasion was there for Christ to come from heaven, obey the law, and endure the curse, if he might become our way? for, "if righteousness be by the law," or men can be their own Saviours, or make use of the mercy of God without an atonement, all the expense of Christ's sufferings and death might have been spared; yea, in that case "the grace of God is set at naught, and Christ is dead in vain." Gal. ii. 21. But Christ is the only way; so St. Peter solemnly declares, Acts iv. 12. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." There is salvation in his name; it was procured by him, and he ever lives to bestow it: it is published by divine authority; it is given forth in the preached Gospel; but there is no other, *under heaven*, and for that purpose; none given by God's orders; if others are given, it is by impostors and deceivers. Jesus only is the way to God and heaven. Thus you see Christ is a *new way*—a *living way*—a *free way*—a *pleasant way*, and the *only way*.

APPLICATION.—My dear friends, suffer me to remind you, that as certainly there is a way to heaven, and Christ is that way, so certainly there is a way to hell, and *sin* is that way; and so surely as the believer in Christ shall arrive at heaven, so surely shall the sinner, going on in his wicked way, get to hell at last. O, sirs, do not despise this! Do not laugh at it! It becomes you to be serious in serious matters. “Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord, *Consider your ways.*” The Scripture speaks of a *false way*, a *crooked way*, a *perverse way*, a *wicked way*. Now, what is *your way*? Is it the way of the flesh, the way of the world? Then, give me leave to tell you, “it leadeth to destruction.” The Lord’s eye is upon you. He knows the way you take; “and the way of the wicked is an abomination to him.” Now, it is possible you may be deceived concerning the way you are in; you may think it safe, while you are in the utmost danger; for *the way of the wicked seduceth them*, Prov. xii. 26; and the Scriptures declare, that *there is a way which seemeth right to man; but the end thereof are the ways of death.* Prov. xiv. 12. Is it not then your wisdom, to examine very carefully whether you are in the right way or not? and as the heart is very deceitful, let me recommend it to you to pray for the Lord’s help, lest, after all, you should be deceived. Let me advise you to use that prayer which you will find in the 139th Psalm, the 23d verse—*Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Listen to the voice from heaven, which invites you in these words—*Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon,* Isa. iv. 7. Let it be your prayer, that God would teach you *his way*, and convert you from the error of *your own ways*: and for this purpose, read and hear the word of God. Say to your companions, in the words of the Prophet—*Come ye, and let us go to the house of God, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.* Isa. ii. 3. O that God may direct your feet into the ways of peace!

Christ the way to God? then, believers, make daily of him as such. Come boldly to a throne of grace. This is a way consecrated for you, and free for your use. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Remember, he is a living way. Live upon him, and live to him. Let others see you are in Christ, by your walking according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. Remember, he is a sure way; you may walk with confidence in it, without fear of miscarrying: "He is faithful who hath promised." Christ hath promised to keep his people, and that none shall pluck them out of his hand. The world may oppose, and Satan oppose, but greater is the power that is in you, than he that is in the world;" and God be for us, who can be against us?"

Christ the way to heaven? and are any of you in it? Look forward with joyful hope of the glory of God. Trust in him for bringing you out of the paths of destruction, leading you into the way of peace. Love Jesus, for he has made your way at such an expense to himself; and be concerned to walk even as he walked. Thus shall you commend this way to others, and constrain them to say, "I will go with you, for God is with you of a truth."

"Jesus, my all, to heaven is gone,
He whom I fix my hopes upon:
His track I see, and I'll pursue
The narrow way till him I view.

"The way the holy prophets went,
The road that leads from banishment;
The king's high-way of holiness
I'll go, for all his paths are peace.

"Thus will I tell to sinners round,
What a dear Saviour I have found;
I'll point to thy redeeming blood,
And say, Behold the way to God!"

SERMON XX.

COMING SINNERS WELCOME TO CHRIST.

John vi. 37. He that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.

TWO things are necessary to encourage a convinced sinner to come to Christ for salvation: the one is, that he is *able* to save; the other is, that he is *willing*. Of the former, few comparatively doubt. And who can doubt at all, if he believes that Christ is the great Creator of the world? For "is any thing too hard for the Lord?" Nor is there the least reason to doubt of his good will to save. And yet how many are distressed with fear on this account? There are few who say—"If thou *canst* do any thing, help us?" But there are many who cry—"Lord, if thou *wilt*, thou *canst* make me clean!" Happy the soul that comes thus far. Jesus will answer, as he did of old,—"I *will*, Be thou clean." This assurance he gives us in many parts of the Scripture, but in none so fully as in the text. Our Lord is here speaking to a multitude of the Jews, who, having seen the miracle of feeding five thousand people with five loaves, followed him a great way, in hope of seeing such another miracle, and perhaps of living upon his bounty. But he exhorts them to seek the bread of life for their souls; laments their unbelief; but comforts himself in this, that all who were given to him by the Father should certainly come to him; and declares his perfect readiness to receive every coming soul. This, my friends, is indeed good news; glad tidings of great joy to those of you who are seeking salvation, and who know that it is to be had only in Jesus; especially if your fearful hearts have been tempted to think he will not receive you. Be no longer faithless, but believing; he says, that if you come, he will in no wise cast you out—he will on no account whatever reject or refuse you, but readily embrace you in the arms of his mercy, and give you pardon, peace, holiness, and heaven. Now, that we may clearly understand this, and get the full comfort of it, let us consider,
I. What is meant by coming to Christ; and,

II. The encouragement held out in the text to all comers.

I. What is meant by *coming to Christ*. None can suppose it is coming to him with our bodies : This is now impossible ; for the heavens have received him out of our sight ; and though his divine presence is every where, his glorified body is only in heaven. And were he on earth, as he once was, coming to him with our bodies only would be of no use, as appears from this chapter, ver. 56, where he says to the people who were round about him—"Ye also have seen me, and believed not." Nor is it merely coming to his house, where he is preached ; nor to his table, where he is set forth. Many do all this, who are none the nearer to Christ. Ezek. xxxiii. 31. But this coming is to be understood spiritually ; it is the coming of the heart ; it is the motion of the mind ; it is "the flight of the soul to Christ." It is therefore much the same as *believing in Christ* ; see ver. 35 ; "and Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life : he that *cometh to me* shall never hunger ; and he that *believeth on me* shall never thirst ;" the same person is intended, and the same act of the mind.

But you will observe, that such a comer to Christ is convinced of his sin and danger, and comes to Christ for help ; just as it is said by the prophet Isaiah (xxvii. 13.) "The great trumpet shall blow, and be blown, and *they shall come which were ready to perish*." No man will go and beg for bread till he is pinched with want. The prodigal son never said, "I will arise, and go to my father," till he was ready to perish with hunger. It is a sense of sin and a fear of hell, together with a hope of mercy, that puts a man upon coming to Christ ; for he himself declares, when speaking to the Jews, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." *Life*, you see, is what a sinner must come for ; the life of his soul, for he now sees that he is exposed by sin to eternal death. Now, "all that a man hath, will he give for his life." When this is in danger, he will be in earnest ; he will be in haste ; and the language of the coming sinner is—"What shall I do to be safe ?"—"Lord save or I perish !"

This coming of his soul to Christ supposes faith. No man can come to him till he has heard of him ; and no man can hear of him but by the Gospel. Now the Gospel means good news ; glad tidings. The Gospel tells us that

"Jesus Christ is come into the world to save sinners;" that "he is come to seek and to save that which is lost;" that "his blood cleanseth from all sin." The Gospel also calls and invites poor sinners to apply to Jesus, that they may have life. For instance, Jesus says, Matt. xi. 28. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Now the sinner hears these gracious words. The Holy Spirit gives him light to understand them. He mixes faith with them. He believes them to be true. Now he cannot believe these things without being affected with them; without having a desire to be interested in them. If he is persuaded of the freeness, fulness, and suitableness, of the salvation that is in Christ, his thoughts must and will be much engaged about it; his affections will be moved; in other words, he comes to Christ, his mind flies to him for refuge, and there it rests.

Now this application of the soul to Jesus has a respect to the various offices and characters which he sustains for our salvation. For instance. Is he called a *Saviour*, that is, a deliverer? the soul desires and hopes for deliverance from sin and hell by him alone. Is he a *Prophet*? the soul, sensible of its woeful ignorance, comes to him, with a humble teachable spirit, to be taught and made wise to salvation. Is he a *Physician*? the convinced sinner sick to death of sin, eagerly applies to him for health and cure. Is he a *Priest*? the sinner, longing for pardoning mercy, depends alone upon the merit of his sacrifice. Is he a *King*? the soul, heartily weary of Satan's tyranny, willingly submits to his mild government, and relies on his heavenly protection. In a word, he "receives Christ Jesus the Lord," as offered to him in the Gospel.

Here let us stop a moment, and put a question. We have been told what believing is; what coming to Christ is; now, my friends, the question is, *Do we thus come to Christ?* He that cometh shall be saved; but he that cometh not, shall not be saved. O let us not neglect this great concern! "How shall we escape, if we neglect this great salvation?" Think of a dying hour. Think of the judgment day.

And O! how dreadful would it be, if Christ should say, to any one of us—"Wretched creature, ruined sinner, your

destruction lies at your own door! You were told of your danger; you were invited to believe in me; you were assured, that if you came to me, I would save you; but you refused; you would not come to me, that you might have life. Perish therefore. Perish without pity. Perish without remedy!" God forbid that we should hear such dreadful words! rather let us, one and all, this very moment, fly, in the wishes and desires of our hearts, to this compassionate Friend of sinners.

But perhaps there are some here who earnestly desire to be saved, yet their hearts are full of fear, lest they should be rejected. They have such a sight of the greatness of their sins—of their ignorance—of their unworthiness—of the wickedness of their hearts, that they are afraid to come, lest the Lord should cast them out.

This is a very common case. You must not think that scarcely any one feels and fears as you do. Were you to talk with serious persons in general, you would find that almost all of them, especially at first, have had the very same fears, and have been so much distressed at times, that they were almost in despair. Jesus Christ knew before hand that it would be thus: and he therefore graciously spoke these kind encouraging words, on purpose to comfort poor, doubting, trembling, coming sinners—"Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." That we may take the comfort of these precious words, let us,

II. Consider the encouragement held out in the text to *all comers*; I say to *all comers*—"him that cometh;" let him be who he may: high or low: rich or poor: young or old: learned or ignorant: yea, even great sinners; the chief of sinners: all who come shall be welcome. Great sinners need great encouragement; and here they have it. What words could have been spoken more comfortable to the distressed sinner? Many are afraid that there is something *peculiar* in their case; something, on account of which they shall certainly be cast out: but our gracious Lord, who well knew what timid creatures his people are, has provided in these words an effectual antidote to their fears. This word, *Him*, takes in all sorts of persons, in all ages and places: all sorts of sinners, even the greatest: it includes liars, drunkards, harlots, thieves, murderers, and

them that obey him." Heb. iv. 15. v. 9. Now it is the office and business of Jesus Christ to save sinners. The high priest of old had nothing to do but with sinners. It was an office on purpose for sinners; and this was the only errand of Christ to our world. He came "not to condemn the world: he declined any thing of that sort; as you may remember respecting the woman taken in adultery, he would not condemn her." John viii. he abhorred her sin, but it was not his office to condemn; he came only to save. And as to proud, self-righteous people, he had nothing to do with them; for "he came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Look then upon Jesus, as a public officer, appointed by divine authority to dispense mercy and pardon to every coming sinner; to every one who comes to God for mercy through him. As it is the duty of a judge to dispense the laws, and do justice between man and man; or as it is the duty of the physician of an hospital to take care of all the sick who are in it; so it is the gracious office of the Lord Jesus to dispense mercy, pardon, grace, life, and salvation, to all who apply to him: and were it possible, we speak it with the deepest reverence, were it possible, which it is not, that the blessed Jesus should refuse and reject one sinner who comes to him for life, he would be unfaithful; but this can never be, we have his word for it in the text, "I will in no wise cast out him that cometh."

3. Consider, once more, the gracious conduct and behaviour of our Saviour when he was upon earth. "He went about doing good." And who were the objects of his regard? Were they the princes and rulers, the rich and prosperous, the wise and learned? No. These, in general, despised and rejected him. He turned his attention to the poor and needy, the sick and miserable; yea, to publicans and harlots, that he might reclaim and save them. This was his reproach—"a friend of sinners." Did he see a multitude of ignorant people following him for instruction? How did he exert himself in teaching them; in houses, in synagogues, in the temple, in a ship, on a mountain! How plainly, how sweetly, how forcibly did he lead them into *divine knowledge*! Nor did he forget their bodies. Were *they hungry*, and ready to faint? he had compassion on

them, and worked miracles to supply them with food. See also what vast numbers of diseased persons apply to him ; the blind ; the deaf ; the dumb ; the diseased with fever, leprosy, palsy ; and others possessed with the devil ; he heals them all. You never read of one poor, sick, miserable creature that he rejected ; if they came they were welcome ; he never sent them away disappointed ; and do you think he will shew less pity to the sorrows of the mind, to the diseases of the soul ? Surely not ; for the salvation of one soul is of more consequence than all the thousands of bodily cures he wrought upon earth. Every man and woman that Christ healed, died at last ; but he whom Jesus saved “ shall never die, but have everlasting life.” And yet this, great as it is, is as easy to him as to say to a leper, Be thou clean. Come but to him, fellow-sinner, and he will directly say, Be thou saved.

Remember, too, what a kind attention Jesus paid to mourning sinners. Remember the penitent harlot in the Pharisee’s house : she came behind him, and washed his feet with penitential tears : she was despised by the Pharisee because she had been a great sinner, but Christ speaks kindly to her, and says, “ Thy sins are forgiven thee.” Remember what he said to another great sinner, the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar—“ If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that speaketh to thee, thou wouldst have asked, and he would have given thee living water,” John iv. 10.—If you knew the worth of salvation, and would ask it of Christ, you should have it ; and he says the very same to us : “ If you knew the value of my salvation, felt your need of it, and would apply to me for it, you should not be denied.” Remember, my friends, how Jesus mourned and wept, when hardened sinners were about to perish in their unbelief ; remember how he wept to think of Jerusalem’s approaching destruction. Remember, too, how he rejoiced at the prospect of a sinner’s salvation : though he was a man of sorrows, this filled him with joy ; and can you doubt, after all this, whether Jesus will receive you or not : O, be not faithless, but believing. Stagger not at this precious promise through unbelief ; but be strong in faith, glorifying God.

APPLICATION.—From what has been said, we may learn what an important thing it is to come to Christ. We are all, by nature, at a dreadful distance ; and “ they that are far from him,” if they die so, “ must perish.” This then is the first and chief thing in religion, to come to Christ ; that is, so to believe the Gospel, as to apply in heart and mind to him for salvation. It is not enough to come to church, or come to meeting, or come to sacrament ; all is in vain, if we do not come to Christ : for salvation is to be had of none but Christ, and not of him neither, without coming for it.

Come then, you who never came before. You shall have heaven if you come ; hell must be your portion if you do not come. Pray to God to draw you. “ Draw me,” says the church, “ we will run after thee.” Come quickly. You may be less disposed to come to-morrow ; yea, to-morrow itself may never come to you. Consider the encouragement that these words of Christ afford. “ Come to me,” said Jesus, “ for I am meek and lowly of heart.” You need not be afraid to come, for he says, and you may believe him, “ he will in no wise cast you out.” Make no excuses. Say not I am ignorant. Come to him, and he will teach you. Say not I have a hard heart. Come to him, and he will soften it. Say not I have a corrupt heart. Come to him, and he will sanctify it. Say not, I am a great sinner—this is the very reason why you should come. “ This man receiveth sinners ;” he came on purpose to save them, and bids you come, that he may save you. Think not foolishly, first to mend yourselves, and then come to him ; you will never be better till you do come.

“ Come needy, come guilty, come loathsome and bare ;
You can’t come too filthy ; come just as you are.”

And you who have come—adore the grace that inclined you to come ; that made you willing in the day of God’s gracious power, and that made you welcome in the day of his wonderful mercy.

“ ’Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forc’d us in ;
Else we had still refus’d to taste,
And perish’d in our sin.”

What hath God wrought ? Is it not good to draw near to God ? Have you not tasted that the Lord is gracious ? " God hath strewed all the way from the gate of hell where thou wast, to the gate of heaven, whither thou art going, with flowers out of his own garden. Behold, how the promises, invitations, calls, and encouragements of the Gospel lie round about thee." O keep near to thy Saviour ; there is safety, there is peace.

This last affords to every believer a sure mark of his election. Do you sometimes fear whether your name is written in heaven ; whether you are among his elect ? Behold the certain proof. " All that the Father hath given to me *shall come to me.*" Have you come to Christ ? Well, then, this is the proof of your being one of those who were given to him. Thus make " your calling and election sure ;" your election, by your calling.

Finally, let those who have come to Christ, by faith, rejoice to think, that in the heavenly world they shall come to him in a superior manner. " Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face : Faith shall be changed into sight, and hope into possession. " So shall we be for ever with the Lord."

" Come weary souls with sin distress'd,
Come, and accept the promis'd rest ;
The Saviour's precious calls obey,
And cast your gloomy fears away.

" Oppress'd with guilt, a painful load,
O come, and spread your woes abroad ;
Divine compassion, mighty love,
With all the painful load remove.

Lord, we accept, with thankful heart,
The hope thy gracious words impart ;
We come with trembling, yet rejoice,
And bless the kind inviting voice.

Dear Saviour ! let thy pow'ful love
Confirm our faith ; our fears remove,
And sweetly influence ev'ry breast,
And guide us to eternal rest."

SERMON XXI.

THE VAIN EXCUSES OF SINNERS EXPOSED.

Luke xiv. 18. And they all, with one consent, began to make excuse.

THE blessings of the gospel of Christ are, in the partable of which the text is a part, fitly compared to the dainties of a noble and costly feast. "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many," ver. 16. So Christ has made plentiful provision in his Gospel for the souls of men, and freely invites all who hear it to be partakers. "And he sent his servants at supper-time, to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready," ver. 17. So Christ having called the *Jews* by his own ministry, sent the apostles after his resurrection to renew the invitation, and to say that the work of redemption was finished, and that he was willing to receive all who should come by faith to him; and this is the language of the Gospel wherever it is preached.

If we consider the nature of a feast, we shall see how properly our Saviour compares the blessings of our salvation to it. In a feast we expect *wholesome provision—plenty—variety—elegance—company, and the whole gratis*. All these, and more, Jesus gives us in his Gospel. Here is "*the bread of life*" which came down from heaven," without which we must for ever perish; but eating which secures our eternal life. Here is *plenty*, for in our Father's house there is bread enough and to spare; and however many the guests who come, still "there is room." Here is *variety*; pardon, peace, holiness, adoption, joy in the Holy Ghost, communion with God, perseverance to the end, and glory, to crown the whole. Here is *elegance*; dainties worthy God to bestow; dainties fetched from heaven; dainties purchased at a cost beyond the value of a thousand worlds—for "Christ's flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed!" Here is *good company*; for, sitting down at the Gospel feast, "we come to an innumerable company of angels: to the general assembly and church of the first-born; and to God, the Judge of all; and to the

spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus.” And what is best of all, it is *gratis*—“without money, and without price”—“the poorer the wretch, the welcomer here.”

Now if these great and glorious blessings are considered, how necessary, how free, how precious and delightful! one would naturally suppose that all men, to whom the Gospel offers them, would as readily and joyfully receive them, as they usually accept an invitation to a plentiful and agreeable entertainment. But, alas, it is not so! If we examine the word, or look into the world, we shall find it quite otherwise.—“They all with one consent begin to make excuse;” for all men, till changed by the grace of God, are blind, and lame, and deaf, and dead, as to all spiritual things; seduced by the Devil’s lies, and in love with the world, they vainly strive “to fill their belly with the husks of swine,” but have no more relish for salvation, than a sick man for wholesome food; yea, like him, “their soul loatheth dainty meat.”

Yet amidst this awful depravity, to the honour of Scripture and the truths of God, men are ashamed to give a direct refusal; conscience admits the value of the Gospel: and therefore, to make their neglect of it appear justifiable, they have recourse to various excuses, with which they strive to satisfy themselves and their neighbours, and vainly hope to satisfy God. To describe these excuses, and to answer them; to shew what they are, and the folly of them, is the business, which, with the Lord’s assistance, I shall now attempt; and O that the Spirit of our God may succeed what shall be said to the conviction of these excusers, and sweeping away all their refuges of lies.”

We shall first notice the three excuses which follow our text; and then proceed to mention other excuses and objections which are often made.

I. The first said—I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it; I pray thee have me excused.

This is the plea of a *rich* man, who had been adding field to field. He was under no kind of necessity to view the land he had bought: probably he had seen it before he had bought it; if not, he might have staid till another day, and *have found the field* in the same condition; but he wanted

to feast his eyes upon his new purchase. See here an instance of the inordinate love of the world, the pride of possession, the deceitfulness of riches. This was "a man of the world, whose portion was in this life," for the sake of which he was deaf to the call of Christ. O how hardly shall they who are rich enter into the kingdom of heaven! so great is the danger of loving the world too much.

2. *And another said—I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.* Here is the man of *business*: the former was taken up with pleasure; this with care. "Too much leisure, or too much business, are equally dangerous to the soul." This was a frivolous excuse like the former; another day would have done as well for proving oxen in the plough, for the purchase was already made; but anxiety for the world prevailed over his spiritual interest. And what is this but the common excuse of tradesmen, labourers, and women who have families? *I have no time to spare for religion.* Let me ask you, What is your time for? Is not the care of the soul *the one thing needful*? Should you not seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness? Besides, "what will it profit, if you gain the whole world, and lose your own soul." And let me tell you, there is time enough to mind the affairs of both worlds; and both are best minded together: the one need not shut out the other. Religion will not make men idle; it will make an idle man industrious; it tends even to worldly prosperity. "Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of this life, and of that which is to come."

How can any man say he has no time for religion, when the Sabbath-day is appointed for that very purpose; yet that holy day is profaned by many, by business, idleness, or taking pleasure. There ere fifty-two days in every year, which ought to be wholly employed in public or private duties of religion. What account will they give to God of their time, who have squandered away their precious hours in sin and folly, and who have turned their backs on the means of grace, which might have made them wise to salvation.

Permit me also to observe, that some, who cannot find time to serve God, can find time to sin: they can find

time to curse and swear, to talk and sing obscenely, to be drunken, and to be wanton. Yea, some of these people complain of too much time; and therefore they invent amusements to *kill time*. O, if the hours that some consume at the ale-house, the fairs, and merry meetings, were spent in hearing and reading the word of God, in prayer, and singing his praises, to how much better account would they turn out!

3. The excuse of a third person was, *I have married a wife, and therefore cannot come*. Here is an excuse of another kind, which takes in too great a regard to creatures, too much fondness for domestic enjoyments, and the pleasures of this life. It was a very weak excuse; for though he had married a wife, he might surely have left her for a few hours, without a breach of proper affection; or he might have taken her with him to such a great feast as this, where so many were bidden, and none forbidden; or he might have gone alone, if he could not persuade her to go with him. How many perish by the unlawful use of lawful things, and undue regard to carnal relations! Husbands and wives, who ought to help each other in the great concerns of salvation, are often deadly hindrances; and will reproach each other to all eternity for being such. Thus Adam ruined himself and all his posterity by carnal fondness, and loving the creature more than the Creator. Let married persons be on their guard; and remember that not only houses and lands, but wives too, must sometimes be forsaken, rather than for their sakes we should forsake Christ.

All these excuses were, as you see, frivolous and foolish; they were all of a worldly kind; and indeed it is *the world*, in some form or other, that proves the great hindrance of men's salvation. But there are many other excuses which people are apt to make, equally absurd. I shall proceed to notice some of them.

Religion, says one, is a hard and difficult thing; hard to understand, and difficult to practise. I answer, *Is it necessary?* Christ says, it is *the one thing necessary*. It is just as necessary as salvation is. And do you object to every thing necessary, because it is difficult? Do not you find *hardships* in your trade or business! and yet you pursue it.

Consider, also, it will be much harder to bear the torments of hell, than to practise the duties of religion. A person, who wanted one of the martyrs to recant, said, "Life is sweet, and death is bitter." "True, said he, but eternal life is sweeter, and eternal death is more bitter." Will not heaven make amends for all our pains and labours? Do you think there is a saint in heaven, that repents of what he did or suffered for Christ? but, in fact, true religion is not so difficult as you may imagine: the path is so plain, that "the way-faring man, though a fool, shall not err therein:" And Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light; his commands are not grievous, and grace makes them pleasant. Religion is far from being a gloomy business, "Wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Can it make a man unhappy to love God, and be loved by him? Is it a gloomy thing to be at peace with God, to know that our sins are pardoned, and to have the earnest of glory? There are joys in religion far beyond any that the world can pretend to, and such as wicked men would be glad to possess, when they come to lie on a dying bed: then is the value of true religion known, when the world can afford no further help.

5. Some object, and say, *Your religious people are hypocrites: after all their pretences, they are like other folks.* I answer by a question—Are they all hypocrites? If so, then there is no such thing as religion in the world; if so, the Bible is all a lie, and Christ must have shed his blood in vain; for he died to redeem us from the world, and our vain conversation in it, and to make us a holy people zealous of good works. It is admitted there are some hypocrites; and woe be to them! There was a hypocrite, a Judas, even among the apostles; but religion did not cease because of him. If there were not a reality and an excellency in religion, there would be no hypocrites; if guineas and bank-notes were not valuable, there would be no counterfeiters; and, I presume, you do not refuse to take any money, because there is base coin; nor would you excuse yourself from paying your rent to your landlord, because *you are afraid of taking bad money.* If there are hypocrites, as you say, and we allow, then there is the greater

need to look to yourself, that you are sincere; but I greatly doubt the sincerity of those who make this excuse; and their hearts tell them it will not be admitted at the bar of God. Besides it is censorious and wicked to judge another man, and to call him a hypocrite, unless his life is bad; but, because you can find no blemish in the life of a truly religious person, you presume to search his heart, and call him a hypocrite. The truth is, you would be glad to prove him such, as an excuse for your own want of religion.

6. Methinks I hear another person say—*I see no occasion to make so much fuss about religion.* You say truly; you do not see: But your not seeing, is a proof of nothing but your own blindness; a blind man sees nothing. If you examine the word of God, you will find the Christian life compared to a warfare; now a soldier's life, in the time of actual service, is not idle. It is also compared to a race, in which great exertion and activity are necessary, if a man would so run as to obtain the prize. A Christian is represented in Scripture as "crucifying the old man of sin," and "mortifying the deeds of the flesh;" and can these things be done by the slothful man, who is a stranger to zeal himself, and hates to see it in another? Has not God required you to love him with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind, and all your strength; and do you know any body that does more than this? Let me also ask you, Why it is that you commend industry in worldly business, and despise it in religion? If there be a hell to avoid, and a heaven to obtain, and sin to destroy, and a God to serve, and a soul to save—why should you not be as earnest in religion as you are in the world? why should not a Christian love God as much as you love money, or sin? I know the answer your heart makes.

7. Another cries—*I shall do as well as my neighbour: and if I perish, God help thousands!* I reply, If you do not better than the thousands that perish, God help you! Jesus Christ has said, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat;" while the narrow way to life is found and trod by few. Think not well of your state, because you are like others: you have greater cause to suspect it. Christ's

flock is small ; but the Devil's herd is large. "The whole world," says St. John, "lieth in wickedness." Follow not, then, the multitude to do evil, but consider their end, and be wise. It is a very affecting and useful story that Mr. Baxter relates in his "Call to the unconverted;" "I remember," says he, "a circumstance that a gentleman told me he saw upon Acham-bridge, over the Severn near Shrewsbury. A man was driving a flock of fat lambs; and something meeting them, and hindering their passage, one of the lambs leaped on the walls of the bridge, and his legs slipping from under him, he fell into the stream: the rest, seeing him, did, one after one, leap over the bridge into the stream, and were all, or almost all, drowned. Those that were behind did little know what was become of them that were gone before, but thought they might venture to follow their companions; but as soon as ever they were over the wall, and falling headlong, the case was altered. Even so it is with unconverted carnal men. One dieth by them, and drops into hell, and another follows the same way; and yet they will go after them, because they think not whither they are gone. O! but when death hath once opened their eyes, and they see what is on the other side of the wall, even in another world, then what would they give to be where they were?"

8. Another objector says—*But I hope to do better than many, for I am not so bad a sinner as some.* I answer, You are not to be compared with others, but with the law of God, which requires perfect obedience. Now, compared with this, you will be found a sinner; and it is not being a less sinner than another that will save you; but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose righteousness is "to and upon all that believe in him." Besides, the folly of such an excuse is manifest; for if finding another man worse than one's self would do, then all sinners might escape except that one, who is worst of all.

9. Perhaps another person will say—*It is true, I am a sinner bad enough; but I do some good things, and will not they atone for my sins?* St. Paul shall answer. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission;" the good works of men were never appointed to the office of a Saviour; for "if righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in

vain." Why do we call Jesus a *Saviour*, and yet hope to be saved by our works? which is to become our own Saviour. But the word of God has settled this, and declares, Eph. ii. 8. "By grace are we saved, through faith; and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." And, to say the truth, no man can do works good in the sight of God until he is first justified by faith, for even "the prayers of the wicked are an abomination to him;" and the thirteenth Article of the Church of England truly says, that "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God; and we doubt not but they have the nature of sin."

10. Unwilling to humble himself, and cry for mercy, another says—*I am no scholar and God expects no more than he gives.* I answer, You may be a true Christian, and yet no scholar. God has sent you his word, and you can *hear* it, if you cannot read it; not to say, that since Sunday schools have been set up, every person almost may learn to read, if he will. But know this, my friends, that ignorance will excuse none. Where knowledge is a duty, ignorance is a sin. It is not your want of opportunity to know the Gospel, but your want of inclination to it, that keeps you ignorant. You take pains to know how you may get food and raiment, or charity; why then remain contentedly ignorant of "the things which belong to your everlasting peace?" Isa. xxvii. 11. 2 Thess. i. 8.

11. Another person, advanced in years, says—*I am too old to change my religion.* What do you call religion? Is it a set of notions and ceremonies? Is it an attachment to certain ministers and buildings? This is not religion. Religion is the devotedness of the heart to God; and without this the most pompous forms are of no avail. Nicodemus was an old man when he came to Christ, who said to him as we say to you, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." In a word, if your religion has not changed you, it is high time to change your religion.

12. Methinks I hear another say,—*I intend to be better at some future time.* So did Felix, who trembled when Paul preached, and said to him, "When I have conve-

in coming so far was for bread. Now Christ shews them a more excellent way; he puts them upon a better plan: he bids them be more moderate in their worldly pursuits, and more diligent in their heavenly pursuits. But when he says, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth," you cannot suppose that he forbids men to labour in an honest way to get their daily bread. No; for God has laid that burden on all the children of Adam: "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread;" and, "He that will not work, neither let him eat." But we are to understand it comparatively. Labour not for worldly bread in the first and chief place; it must not be our principal care and concern; and for this good reason—it perisheth; not only our necessary food, but the wealth, honour, and pleasure of the world, which men hunger for, like meat, perish; they perish in the using, and they who use them must soon perish in the grave. This shews the folly of being too eager in the pursuit of them; and at the same time should put us upon the greatest diligence in seeking for the food of our immortal souls; even Christ himself, who is the bread of life, as he largely shews in this chapter. Now, to help you in doing thist we shall

I. Consider JESUS CHRIST under the emblem of *Food*; and,

II. Enquire into the nature of that LABOUR which is here recommended, in order to obtain it.

I. Let us consider Jesus Christ under the emblem of *Food*. As we cannot understand any thing that is *spiritual*, but as it is compared to something that is *natural*, God is pleased in his word to use many *similitudes*, whereby to set forth the excellencies of the Lord Jesus Christ, and recommend him to us. Hence he is called a *Sun*, to signify Light; a *Rock*, to signify Support; a *Refuge*, to signify Safety; and here he compares himself to *Food*. And this way of teaching not only helps us to understand spiritual things, but it serves to put us in mind of them; so that when we see the sun, it may remind us of Christ our light; and when we take our meat, it may put us in mind of Jesus, the meat which endureth to eternal life. This is part of that spiritual mindedness, which to enjoy is

life and peace. A few particulars will convince you how properly Christ is compared to food.

1. Because Christ is as necessary to the life of the soul as meat is to the support of the body. You know God has so formed our bodies, that we cannot live long without food. Christ is no less necessary for the soul; so it is written in this chapter, ver. 33, "For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world;" and again, ver. 35, "I am the bread of life;" and ver. 51, "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." The same is asserted again and again throughout the chapter; the whole of which you will do well to read when you go home.

2. All kinds of food are the gift of God; no man in the world can make any thing eatable. Man can plant, and sow, and rear cattle; he can also cook his food with endless variety, when he has got the materials; but he can make none of them. No man can give life to a plant, or to a beast. Every thing we eat is the gift of a good God. Just so, Christ, the bread of life, is the gift of God. "God gave his Son." "Blessed be God for his unspeakable gift!" The manna that God sent down to feed Israel in the wilderness was a lively type of Jesus; "for the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven," ver. 33.

3. Most kinds of food are prepared for our use by *fire*. So Christ, as our sacrifice, endured, in the garden, and on the cross, the dreadful wrath of God, as "a consuming fire." This was set forth in a lively manner by the sacrifices of old, which were burnt on the altar, which represented that Christ was to be consumed by the flames of his love for his Father and his elect, and at the same time by the flames of the divine wrath against sin, which he had undertaken to bear. But the Paschal-lamb was not wholly consumed; after it was roasted with fire, it was eaten by the ancient believers; the same sacrifice which procured their safety became their food; and thus it is with us, if by faith we feed upon Christ crucified. And this leads to another remark.

4. Food must be actually received, eaten, and digested, *in order to support life*. It is not hearing of food, nor

seeing it, nor smelling it, that will satisfy hunger or nourish the body; nor will merely hearing of Christ, nor attending ordinances, nor partaking of sacraments, nourish the soul unto eternal life. By true faith, every believer receives Christ for himself, depends upon him for his own salvation, and feeds upon him in his heart with thanksgiving. This eating is absolutely necessary to salvation, as Christ declares, ver, 53. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the son of man, ye have no life in you."

5. There is pleasure and delight in the reception of food, if persons are in health; and so there is in feeding upon Christ by faith. But then there must be spiritual health and appetite. The disordered stomach of a sick man "loatheth dainty meat;" and there are those who abhor the doctrine of salvation by Christ; but the man who is alive to God, who hungers and thirst after righteousness, finds sweet and heavenly delight in partaking of Christ and his benefits. His love, his grace, his blood, his righteousness, his intercession, his glory, are sweeter to the taste than honey to the palate. He sits down to the Gospel table, and finds there a feast of fat things full of marrow, and can say with the spouse in the Canticles, "I sat under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."

6. We may remark, that when Christ is compared to food, it intimates the *constancy* with which believers must make use of him. Many of the businesses and pleasures of life are occasional only; but we cannot live without "daily bread." Just so it is, that "the life we live in the flesh must be by the faith of the Son of God." "The just shall live by his faith;" and he who has once "tasted that the Lord Jesus is gracious, will say, "Evermore give me this bread!"

II. We now proceed to enquire into the nature of that *labour* which Christ recommends in the text; for he not only directed the people to moderate their worldly pursuits, saying, "Labour not for the meat that perisheth," but he directed them to employ themselves diligently in *the pursuit of heavenly things*; as if he had said, "Labour for the meat which endureth unto eternal life." But we are

not to suppose that any sort of labour is intended by which a sinner can *merit* eternal life, or that any diligence in religion will make a man worthy of Christ, or the mercy of God through him. This is a common and a very dangerous mistake; but this would be to subvert the whole Gospel, which teaches us, that “not by works of righteousness which we have done,” but “by grace are we saved, through faith; which faith itself is the gift of God.” The Lord will beat down all human pride, and glorying in self. He alone must be exalted in our salvation. And it is evident, from the latter part of the text, that merit is entirely out of the question; for, of this bread of life it is said—*which the Son of Man shall give you*: If then it be *given*, the labour required cannot be in order to merit or purchase it.

The nature of this labour may be learned from the following verses: the people asked our Lord what it was. *What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?* They wanted to know whether he required any other works than Moses did: they thought something very *great* was necessary, which they called “the works of God;” and they seemed to think, that by some of their good deeds they might merit this bread. Now observe Christ’s plain answer. *This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent*—“This is the great duty which is necessary to the acceptance of your persons and your works: this is what God commands, approves, and is the Author of; namely, that ye receive me, and rest your souls on me for salvation, as appointed of the Father for that purpose, and plainly authorized and approved by the miracles I have wrought.”

FAITH, then, is the work intended. Believing in Christ is that labour which he recommends to us, in order to our living upon this heavenly food. You will ask—What is faith? I answer in the words of the late reverend Mr. Romaine: “Faith signifies the believing the word of God. It relates to some word spoken, or to some promise made by him, and it expresses the belief which a person who hears it has of its being true. He assents to it, relies upon it, and acts accordingly. This is faith.” We are to believe all that the word of God declares; but faith,

as connected with salvation, chiefly relates to the divine testimony, or record of Christ, concerning Jesus Christ. All faith relates to some testimony, human or divine. Now, saith St. John, *if we receive the witness (or testimony) of men, the witness (or testimony) of God is greater : for this is the witness (or testimony) which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness*, that is, the testimony of Christ in himself, in his own mind or conscience: *he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in the Son.* 1 John v. 9—11. The Holy Spirit enlightens the mind into the true meaning of this blessed testimony; and the believer is persuaded of its truth, excellence, and everlasting importance. He assents to it as true. He delights in it as good, and rests his eternal all on this foundation; expecting that God, who is faithful to his promise, will not suffer him to perish, but give him eternal life. Or, as the renowned Witsius expresses it, “As faith is an assent given to the divine truth, it includes in it the acceptance of the benefit offered by the covenant of grace. Here is my Son, says God, and salvation in him : I offer him to whoever desires him, and believes that he shall find his salvation in him. Who desires him? Who believes this? I do, says the believer; I greatly long for him : I believe my salvation to be laid up in him : I take him as thus offered to me. Be it so, saith the Lord.”

Perhaps you will now ask me, But why is this called labour? Is there any difficulty in all this? Yes; much every day : for,

1. Believing in him alone for salvation is quite foreign to the notions of men by nature, and quite contrary to the terms of the covenant of works, which all natural men are under, and to which even awakened sinners are much inclined. St. Paul laments the state of the Jews, who, “being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, would not submit themselves to the righteousness of God.” Rom. x. 3. They sought righteousness by their works, “they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.” Rom. ix. 32. Now it is one of

the hardest things in the world to bring off a moral devout man from dependence on his good works, to trust his salvation on Christ alone; therefore is believing called a labour.

2. There are many other people who think that believing in Christ for salvation is too easy, cheap, and common a thing; they would rather do some hard and difficult task : something that looks great and meritorious ; such as building a church or an hospital; giving a great deal to the poor, or wearing sackcloth, or living in a monastery, or going a pilgrimage. There have been people that have walked with spikes in their shoes, and others who have burnt their children in the fire, to appease their gods. But only to believe in Christ seems too simple and easy a thing, and on that very account it is hard to them. Thus we read in the Old Testament of a Syrian general who had the leprosy, and went a long journey to be cured by Elisha the prophet. When this great man came to the door, the prophet sent out a messenger desiring him to wash in the river Jordan, and he should be healed. This you will say was an easy thing. So it was : but that very circumstance made it hard, for it put the great man in a rage. "I thought," said he, that he would surely come out to me and stand, and call upon his God, and strike his hand over the place;" so he went away in a passion. But one of his servants wisely said, "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, wash, and be clean?" He took the hint, and was perfectly healed. 1 Kings v.

3. Another thing makes believing a labour. Many think that if much stress is laid upon faith, it will make people neglect good works, and so be hurtful to the interest of virtue and morality. Some think it is not amiss to talk of Christ and his merits to dying people, because they cannot live to abuse the doctrine; but that little should be preached about free grace and the blood of Christ, lest it should lead to licentiousness. Alas, for such persons! It is evident they are "the whole, who need not the physician." If ever they had been convinced of sin, and led to fear the wrath of a just and holy God, they would gladly fly to the only refuge for a sinner: and they would know by experience, that the Gospel is as good a doctrine to live

by, as it is to die by. And indeed it is an abominable reproach upon the Holy Gospel to charge it with so bad a tendency. In fact, we know from the word of God, from experience, and from observation, that faith purifies the heart, works by love, and produces all the fruits of righteousness and goodness.

4. But the great thing that makes believing in Christ so laborious is, the awful view that a convinced sinner often has of his guilt. He sees he has broken the law of God, and is exposed to its dreadful curse. He knows the corruption of his nature, and the plague of his heart. He feels that his heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. He ranks himself among the chief of sinners; thinks there is not another sinner in the world so bad as himself; he fears there is something singular in his case: perhaps he is ready to fear that he has committed the unpardonable sin: he complains that he is beset with blasphemous thoughts: and on all these, and perhaps on many other accounts, is afraid there is no help for him in God.

Besides, the Devil is very busy with a convinced sinner. He is afraid of losing a subject; and as it was of old with a young man who was coming to Christ for a bodily cure, "while he was yet a coming, the Devil threw him down and tare him;" so Satan tries all his skill, and employs all his agents, to keep the soul from Christ; he will oppose nothing so much as his flying to Christ by faith.

Add to these difficulties one more. The convinced and enlightened soul, who is fully persuaded there is no salvation but in Christ, is apt to think it would be presumption in him to go to Christ, as he is so guilty, so filthy, so unworthy. He thinks, when he is more reformed, more deeply humbled, and has obtained more knowledge and sanctity, then he may venture to hope in Christ. But this is a great mistake, a hurtful error; it is turning the Gospel upside down. The sinner's first business is, to fly to Christ; to believe the record of God concerning him; to believe that his blood cleanseth from all sin; that every coming sinner will be welcome; Christ casting out none that come to him.

These considerations fully shew how properly our blessed Lord speaks in the text, LABOUR for the meat which

endureth to eternal life. And yet, blessed be God, who is "the Author and Finisher of our faith;" he can render this easy to the soul, by the power of his holy Spirit; for "he worketh in us both to will and to do according to his good pleasure." "Our sufficiency," in this respect, "is of God:" and hard as it may seem at first, it becomes easier as we continue in the school of Christ, and there "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus."

APPLICATION.—1. This subject *reproves* us. So our Lord intended it; so let us receive it. How many among us labour hard! but for what! A morsel of bread. Six long days in a week are spent in toil, to procure a few shillings. All this is right. This is no more than what God requires. "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work." But is this all? Is there no concern for the soul? Do not think, my dear friends, that labouring for the body will excuse you from "the one thing needful," which is "the care of the soul." You must mind both worlds; and both will be best minded, when they are minded together. "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things (food and raiment) shall be added to you." Think of the vanity of this world. Remember that earthly things perish in the using! but Christ, the bread of life, endureth for ever; and he that eateth of this bread shall never die.

2. Do you ask, How I shall get faith? I answer, It is the gift of God, and is to be sought for by earnest prayer, and daily attention to the Gospel, the word of faith. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Attend therefore where Christ is preached. Christ's sheep know his voice: they know it from a stranger's voice. May you learn to distinguish; and while you listen to the truth, pray earnestly that the Holy Spirit of truth may enlighten your minds, and enable you to mix faith with it; so shall it profit your souls.

3. We may also learn from this text that many labour in vain, even in religion. They follow after righteousness; they want to be good, and hope to be saved; but they attain not their desires. What is the matter? "They seek it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law,"

Rom. ix. 31. Avoid this rock, on which so many slip and remember, that the first business in religion is, to believe in Jesus. Begin with Christ, and every thing will follow in its due order.

4. To conclude. Have any of you by precious faith received Christ ; Do you take him as the bread of life, food of poor souls ? Rejoice then in the assurance which God gives you of eternal life. Those who ate the manna in the wilderness all died ; but, saith Christ, ver. 51. *I the living bread which came down from heaven ; if any man eateth of this bread, he shall live for ever. Who eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day.* Believe and be happy.

And now, what doth the Lord require of thee, O believer in Jesus ? He requireth thee to walk in his will and labour in his service. When Elijah was ready to starve, the Lord provided food for him ; he ate and drank and laid down to rest. The angel touched him a second time, and said, " Arise, and eat, because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink and went, in the strength of that meat, forty days and forty nights, unto the mount of God." 1 Kings xix. ; Thus, Christian, feed upon Christ, " whose flesh is really indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed," and in strength derived from Jesus, thou shalt " run with weariness, and walk without fainting," till thou reach the mountain of God, and sit down at the marriage-feast of the Lamb.

" Jesus, we bow before thy feet !
Thy table is divinely stor'd ;
Thy sacred flesh our souls have ate ;
'Tis living bread ; we thank thee, Lord !

" Joy to the Master of the feast ;
His name our souls for ever bless ;
To God the King, and God the Priest,
A loud Hosanna round the place."

SERMON XXIII.

A SINNER CHANGED BY GRACE.

1 Pet. iv. 3, 4. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.

SIN, that accursed thing, Sin, was the occasion of our Saviour's death; and he died, not only to save us from guilt, that we might not be condemned, but to save us also from its power, that it might not rule over us. This double benefit of the Redeemer's death was signified by the water and the blood which issued from his pierced side; for St. John observes, 1 John v. 6. "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood." By the *blood*, we are justified from the guilt of sin; by the *water*, our polluted nature is purified. Thus is Jesus a complete Saviour. Both these are equally necessary; and what God has joined together, let no man put asunder; for as they were united in the Redeemer's design, so are they united in the experience of all who believe. When a sinner is awakened and brought to Christ for pardon, then he also feels an earnest desire for this second benefit of his death, a deliverance from the power of sin. So St. Peter teaches us in this chapter, v. 1. *Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind*; that is, all Christians should be armed with the same resolution against sin, and for holiness, as Christ was. But Christ having suffered in the flesh for sin, lived in the spirit unto God; therefore should we also cease from sin, and live no more to *the lust of men*, but to *the will of God*; for, saith the Apostle, "the time past of our life may suffice." Yes, we have had enough, and too much of sin: it has taken up too much of our time and affection; henceforth may we live to God. In these useful words we have the four following things:

I. The walk of a natural man described.

II. The great change that grace makes in such a man.

III. The reasonableness of that change : and

IV. The usage which a changed person may expect from the world.

I. The walk of a natural man described—*He works the will of the Gentiles, and lives in sin.* It is not certain whether St. Peter wrote this epistle to the Jews only, or to Gentiles also ; nor is it of any consequence to us ; for there is no great difference between a carnal Jew, a carnal Gentile, or a carnal Christian. All unconverted people live not according to the will of God. The will of God is the proper rule of our actions ; but who enquires after this ? who says with converted Saul, “ Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ? ” No natural man says so ; only those, who, like Saul, “ are converted to God.” And here is the grand difference between *real Christians* and all other people. The latter *walk according to the flesh* ; the former, *according to the Spirit* ; for, as Paul largely shews in the 8th chapter to the Romans, *they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh ; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.* And what are all the thoughts, words, desires, pursuits, and delights of carnal men about, but something of a fleshly kind : they have no knowledge of, nor care for, no delight in, any thing that is spiritual or heavenly, nor can they, while in that state ; for as our Lord says, John iii. 6. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.* Till a man is born again, he works the will of the Gentiles ; he walks according to the flesh. The Lord, in his mercy, discover to those who are in this state the danger of it, and deliver them out of it by his changing grace !

Observe in the text, *the readiness* with which men sin ; they *run* to it, it is their delight ; their feet are swift to do evil, while to every thing good they are dull and slow.—Observe also, that men sin in *company*, and encourage each other in sin : “ they think it strange that ye run not *with them.* ” Adam fell in company, and for the sake of company ; and all his children are not only corrupt, but corruptors ; beware then of “ evil communications, which corrupt good manners,” and take the wise man’s advice, “ My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.” Remark

likewise the *constancy* with which men sin; they “wrought the will of the Gentiles:” they worked at sin as a man works at his trade, not occasionally, but daily. Hence sinners are called *workers of iniquity*, and as such sentenced, by Christ the Judge, to eternal misery.

Let us now take notice of the particulars of this wicked course. *Lasciviousness* is first mentioned. This means wantonness expressed in looks, words, and actions. *Lusts*, or criminal desires and pursuits after unlawful embraces. *Excess of wine*; that is, immoderate drinking of any strong liquors. *Revellings* and *Banquettings*, feasting with songs and music, including the amusements of the play-house, and similar diversions, which are Satan’s traps to catch unwary souls. *Abominable idolatries*, or the worship of idols, which is an abominable affront to the only living and true God; and which was generally attended with abominable lewdness and drunkenness, and other vices. These were the practices of the heathen; and are they not also the practices of many called Christians? Is there not in every place some persons who run to this excess of riot? O, that such may see the error of their ways, and cry to the Lord for his mercy and grace! And this is next to be considered.

II. *The great change that the grace of God makes in a natural man.*

The change we mean is far more than the mere *reformation* of a sinner’s life; it is an inward, supernatural change, wrought by the Spirit of God, and by means of the Gospel of Christ. So we read, ver. 6. of this chapter, *For this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead*; that is, to those believers who were dead when St. Peter wrote, as well as to those who were then living: *that they might be judged according to men in the flesh*; that they might judge and condemn themselves for their fleshly lusts, and mortify their carnal appetites; and so be *dead to sin, but live according to God in the Spirit*; that being quickened from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, they might, being helped by the Spirit, be conformed to the will of God, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight.

It is by the preaching of the Gospel that this change is

generally effected ; for it is the Gospel, only, which is "the power of God to salvation." This is God's mighty instrument for "pulling down the strong holds of the devil," for "opening men's eyes, and turning them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

The sinner is usually first alarmed by the *Law*, as contained in the ten commandments. If his eyes are opened by the Spirit of God, he sees that "the law is spiritual," and reaches to the secret thoughts of his heart ; and that having broken the law, he is under its curse. This, though before he was "alive without the law," the commandment comes with power to his conscience, sin revives, and he dies : that is, he now sees he is a dead man in law ; justly condemned to eternal death on account of his sins.

But the law alone is insufficient to destroy the power of sin. The Gospel is the instrument employed by the Holy Spirit for this purpose. Sin never appears to the believer so sinful as when he beholds Christ crucified for it. Jesus Christ, as crucified for sin, was the grand subject of apostolic preaching. The first ministers of Christ "determined to know nothing among the people but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." And O, how glorious were the triumphs of the cross ! It was this which subdued the hearts of poor, wretched, beastly, devilish men, among the heathen. Those who had wallowed in the filth of sin, and reduced human nature to the most degraded state, became holy, humble, chaste, temperate, honest, pious, gentle, useful men. This it was that changed St. Paul from a bloody persecutor of the saints to an humble disciple and flaming preacher of Christ. So he says, Gal. vi. 14. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." So that every believer may say and sing,

"It was the sight of thy dear cross
First wean'd my heart from earthly things,
And taught me to esteem as dross
The mirth of fools and pomp of kings."

And this shews that the very first business of a convicted sinner, who "hungers and thirsts after righteousness," is to come to Christ. We have no strength and ability to

ourselves, by nature, to become holy and subdue our sins; we must begin to live to God in a new way, by faith in Christ. The efforts of a natural man towards holiness are all forced and unnatural; we must have a new nature and new powers; and these we can have only in and from Christ, and by virtue of union to him, through faith. Christ dwells in the hearts of believers, and they dwell in him. They are "Members of his body, and are so joined to him as to become one spirit." They are branches of Christ the tree; separate from him they can do nothing: but from union to him proceed all their good works, and sincere acceptable obedience. Thus the soul is brought to cleave to Christ with purpose of heart, to hate every false way, and to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this present evil world. This is the great change that grace makes.

III. We proceed to speak of *the reasonableness of this change*.

"The time past, (says our holy apostle) the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles." Not as if sin was entitled to any portion of our short and mortal lives. No. A moment given to sin is a moment too much. But it may well be said, "the time past" may suffice; for,

"Sin is a dreadful waste of precious time. Life is very short." Time flies on swift wings; and when once gone, is gone for ever. We can never recall a lost hour. And yet, how is time squandered away! O visit dying beds, to learn the value of time. What would some dying people give for a few weeks or a few hours? There have been instances of rich men, who have offered physicians half their estates, if they could prolong their lives for a few weeks! And what is "the worm that never dies," but the horrid remorse of a damned sinner, reflecting, with intolerable anguish, upon the loss of his time and abuse of his mercies in a life of sin!

Sin is also a *useless* thing. "What fruit had ye?" said St. Paul to the converted Romans; "what fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" What profit, honour, or pleasure, did ye find in your former sinful courses, even while pursuing them? Were they not at-

tended with remorse, trouble, mischief, and stings of conscience? And what bitter fruits do they produce in reflection: as holy Job says, "Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the sins of my youth!" Sin is extremely *hurtful* and *dangerous* to ourselves and others. The sinner is like "the madman, who casteth abroad fire brands, arrows, and death, and saith, Am I not in sport? You would shudder to see a child playing with a razor, or with the fire; or standing on the brink of a deep precipice at the sea side! Yet such is the state of every man in his sins. Such was once our state: and may not the time past suffice to have wrought the will of the flesh, yea the will of the Devil, who was aiming at our destruction: "for the end of those things is death:" the direct tendency and due desert of these sinful practices is nothing less than death temporal and eternal. How dreadfully mischievous is the sinner to his neighbour! He cannot be content to perish alone. Like the Devil, he labours to bring others into the same condemnation with himself. He is a soul-murderer. What a melancholy reflection to a considerate mind.—Perhaps there are souls now in hell, who perished by my means. It was the dread of such a reflection that probably made Dives wish that a message might be sent to his five brethren, to prevent their coming to that place of torment; for it is likely they had been led into sin by his infidel counsel and wicked example; and he knew that, if they came there, they would upbraid him as the author of their ruin. Now surely the time past may suffice to have been so hurtful to ourselves and others.

It is also reasonable to forsake sin, "because it is so highly dishonourable to the blessed God." Surely God deserves to be loved and obeyed by all his creatures; but sin is an act of robbery; it defrauds God of his just rights, and transfers to Satan the obedience due to him. It is an act of treason and rebellion against the Majesty of heaven. Yea, it is a kind of *atheism*; for in vain we profess "to know God, if in works we deny him;" if we live in sin, we live "without God in the world."

Once more, a life of sin is directly "contrary to our Christian profession." Why do we call ourselves *Christians*, if we neither obey nor resemble Christ? Why call

we him Master and Lord, if we do not the things which he commands? Were we not baptised unto Christ? and does not our baptism signify "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness?" a renouncing the world, the flesh, and the devil? To be a Christian indeed, is to be a follower of Christ, to have the same mind in us as was in him, and to walk even as he walked; but what a horrid contradiction there is in such names or characters as these—a drunken Christian—a lying Christian—a lewd Christian—a profane Christian. I remember to have read of Alexander the Great, that he had a soldier in his army of his own name, but understanding that he was a base cowardly fellow, he called him into his presence, and reproaching him with cowardice, said "Either change your name, or fight better!" And how properly might the great and holy Redeemer say to wicked men, professing to be Christians, Renounce the name of Christians, or live better! How reasonable then is it to forsake sin, seeing it was such a waste of precious time; so useless, so hurtful to ourselves and others; so dishonourable to God; and so contrary to our holy profession as Christians! Rather let us obey the exhortation of St. Paul, Rom. xii. 1. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service;" it is fit and right, as we are the creatures of God, the author of all our powers, and especially if we are partakers of his grace and love in Christ Jesus;—"for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen!"

IV. Lastly, we are to consider *the usage which a changed person may expect to meet with from a wicked world*: "they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of roit; speaking evil of you, they wonder what is come to you, that you have so suddenly forsaken their company and their pleasures; they cannot account for such a strange alteration, and they despise you as stiff, unsociable, foolish creatures, or as mad enthusiasts.

Now here observe, that where such a change as this takes place, it is visible; for if the world did not see it, they could not hate it. And indeed, when persons who have lived in open sin become serious and holy, the change can-

not be hid. It is said of Barnabas, that "when he came to Antioch, and had *seen* the grace of God, he was glorified it, as a spiritual principle in the heart, can be seen by bodily eyes? but the effects of it in a holy conversation must and will be seen. Christians, who are humbled and retired, are like "a city set upon a hill, cannot be hid;" they are like "a candle that giveth light unto all that are in the house;" and their "light shall shine before men, that they may see their good works, and glorify their father who is in heaven." Matt. v. 16. Yes, the change we speak of will be observed in all our companions will be deserted, places of vain amusements forsaken. No oath or filthy jest, or light expression proceed from the mouth; the places where the Gospel is preached will be frequented, the Sabbath day will be fully kept holy, and the whole behaviour and appearance will be such as become godliness.

This will excite hatred. "The carnal mind is set against God," and every thing godly, and godlike. God permits, persecution will follow; and if this persecution be public by the magistrate (which blessed be God, our rulers prevent) yet relations, friends, and neighbours, shall dislike. "Every one who is godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution;" so the Scripture declares, and serious persons will be sure to find it. Nor let them be vexed or be offended at this, for from the beginning it was so. "He that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit." And every believer must bear the cross; if not *Abel's* cross, yet *Isaac's*; if not reproaches, yet mocking. *They think it strange*, and then *evil*: perhaps they will falsely accuse you; they will say you are hypocrites, and take up a profession of religion to answer some wicked purposes. But be not offended; it is rather "a token for good" on your behalf, which, to their shame, it is an awful evidence of their Christlessness, and wicked state; for, as it follows in the next verse, "we shall give account to him that is ready to judge the living and the dead;" they must answer for all "their ungodly deeds and hard speeches;" and what will they answer? Jesus, on whom their reproaches fall, when he shall say, "Why persecute ye me?" Let persecutors consider that they will answer this.

APPLICATION.—We have considered, in the first place, the walk of a *natural man*; and may we not say, Lord, what is man! What a wretched, fallen, guilty creature is man! How is our nature depraved, which inclines us to such a course, and what abundant cause is here for mourning and lamentation on this account. And say, my friends, what sort of a walk is *ours*? Whose will do we follow? Is it the will of the flesh, or the will of God? Which of these do *you* consult? Do you consider in your daily walk, Will this action I am going to do, this pleasure I am going to take, please God or not? Can I ask his blessing upon it? Are you not rather led captive by your sinful passions, your sensual inclinations, and the custom of the world? But you plainly see from the text that this way leads to destruction, and you must forsake it, or perish.

Learn also that *the commonness of sin affords no excuse for it*. The will of the Gentiles, or the way of the world, is the broad way to ruin. Follow not the multitude to do evil. Forsake the foolish and live. The narrow road that leads to heaven has but few travellers; God grant we may be found among the number!

From what has been said, the *necessity of regeneration* evidently appears. Is the heart of man so corrupt? Is he so strongly inclined to the will of the world, and the beastly lusts of the flesh? what then can effect an entire change and alteration, first in the heart, and then in the life. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” With man this is impossible; but nothing is too hard for the Lord. The people to whom St. Peter wrote had felt this change, and so have thousands in all ages. For this purpose the Lord hath sent his Gospel hither. Salvation has come to this house. To you is the word of this salvation sent. The Lord open your hearts, as he did Lydia’s to attend to the word. Which of you is willing to be saved; to be saved *now*; to be saved from sin; to be saved by Jesus? He is able to save to the uttermost; it is his office to save; it is his delight to save; and therefore he sends us, in his name, to invite you to come to him; to beseech you to be reconciled to God. Come, then, fellow-sinners, all

things are ready. Come to this great and loving Saviour and he will wash you from all your past sins in the tain of his precious blood, and give you a new heart to love him, and walk in his holy pleasant way. O, that we could persuade you to forsake your sins, come to Jesus for life. But this is his work. The Lord will make you "willing in the day of his power."

Christians! with what holy shame and grief may review the former part of your lives! May not "the past suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentile? Did you not live long enough in sin? Ah, you will say, Too, too long! O, the vanity of my childhood and youth! O, mispent sabbaths! O, my youthful wantonness, and revellings. I look back upon them with a mixture of shame and indignation. I blush to lift up my face to the holy God. I smite my breast with the publican, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Well, God has been merciful to you. Is not the brand plucked out of the fire! O, what debtors are we to the free, sovereign, almighty grace of Jesus. You were dead in trespasses and sins: you hath he quickened, saved by his grace. "Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Cor. vi. 11.

And now, my friends, what doth the Lord require of us? Have we lost so much time while we were in our sins? O let us be doubly diligent in future. Let us value the time, for the days are few and evil. Let us be active for God, for our own souls, and for others. Let us lay ourselves out for usefulness. And instead of *running* with the wicked in the ways of sin, let us run with enlarged hearts in the ways of God. Let us exhort one another daily, and so much the more as we see the day approaching. Let us provoke one another to love and to good works. Let us prove our love to Jesus, our great Deliverer, by holy obedience and grateful praise.

SERMON XXIV.

DIVES AND LAZARUS;
OR, THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE FOR THE PURPOSES
OF SALVATION.

(Intended as a check to Infidelity.)

Luke xvi. 31. If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

ETERNITY is at hand! Let us take a view of it—A view set before us by Jesus Christ himself: by him “who brought life and immortality to light,” and who best knew how to describe the state of a saint in heaven and a sinner in hell. Our text is the close of a parable, designed to reprove the Pharisees, who were covetous and worldly. Here we have an account of a very wicked man who was rich, and of a very good man who was poor. Death came and ended all the pleasures of the one, and all the pains of the other. The rich man, being in hell, desires the poor man may be sent from heaven to convert his brethren on earth; but he is told in these words, that if they will not mind their Bible, they would mind nothing else. This text, my friends, is chosen on purpose to recommend the Bible to you, that you may not neglect the only book, which, under God, is able to save your souls.

We read in the 19th verse—“There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.” It is not a sin to be rich; nor is it a sin for the rich to wear handsome clothes, nor keep good tables: but it is very dangerous to the soul to be rich; because those who have much of the world are tempted to love the world too much, to forget God, and to neglect their souls. A life of ease, pleasure, and honour, is so contrary to a life of faith, repentance, and self-denial, that few rich men are saved.

Ver. 20, 21. “And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores.” *Learn from this, that we cannot judge of any man’s state,*

before God, by his circumstances in the present world. A wicked man may be very prosperous, and a good man may be in great affliction. Poor *Lazarus* was *helpless* indeed, as his name signifies : it is hard to be poor, but harder still to be sick and poor. *Lazarus* could not work, or he would not have begged. He could not even walk. Somebody was kind enough to bring him to the rich man's gate (for there was no parish relief in those days) in hopes that he would be observed, pitied, and relieved. Poor *Lazarus* was very modest and humble. A bit of broken meat was all he wanted ; but this was denied. The wanton pampered dogs came and licked his running sores ; which shews that he had not a bit of linen to cover them, and keep them from the air ; and he was so weak that he could not keep off the dogs, which seemed ready to devour him.

What a picture is this of a hard-hearted rich man, and a patient beggar ! “ *Dives* could not plead that he was oppressed by a number of beggars, for *Lazarus* was alone ; nor that he was unknown to him, for he lies at the gate ; nor could he say he was idle, and might work, for he lay helpless on the ground ; nor that he wanted a great deal, for he would have been contented with crumbs : not that his servants took care of him, for not one of them relieves him ! ” Well ! if man will not pity, God will.

“ It came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by Angels into Abraham's bosom.”

No doubt, death was welcome to him. He had nothing in this world, to set his heart upon : that is an advantage which the poor have above the rich. Poor *Lazarus* sunk at last under his heavy burdens. Perhaps his wounds mortified ; or he might be starved to death. But blessed are the dead that die in the Lord ; they cease from their labours and troubles, and are at rest. Angels, who are ministering spirits to the saints, carried his departing soul to glory ; where, like an honoured guest at a feast, he was placed next to the father of the faithful, in whose steps no doubt he had trod, having been a partaker of the same precious faith in Christ.

The rich man also died, and was buried. “ Riches profit not in the day of wrath.” Money will not bribe death. *Dives* was bound to the world by a thousand silken cords

and golden chains ; but death broke them all in a moment; and hurried away his guilty, unprepared soul to the torments of hell. What availed his pompous funeral? The pampered carcase must be the food of worms, while his wretched spirit is confined in the region of despair.

“ And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom ; and he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue ; for I am tormented in this flame.” Ver. 23, 24.

His eyes, once fixed on earth and earthly things, and which were always turned away from God and his word, and now forced to look upward : and the glimmering of light only serves to discover, at a dreadful distance, the happiness he had lost by his sins, and the bliss of that neglected child of God, who once lay and perished at his gate.

Observe. *Now* he prays. He should have prayed on earth, then he would have been heard. He prays to a saint ; he should have prayed to God. He pleads relation to Abraham, calling him Father. Church privileges, or relation to pious people, will not save wicked professors. He asks for *mercy*, but he asks too late ; the door of mercy is for ever shut. He does not expect deliverance, he asks only a moment’s partial ease ; but this he asks in vain ; and how just it is, that he who refused a crumb, should be denied a drop ! Observe the answer—ver. 25. “ Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things ; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.”

Mark this well, you who place your happiness in eating and drinking, and putting on fine clothes. Are these *your* “ good things ?” Poor portion indeed ! No man can have a greater curse than to be rich, and take his pleasure, and enjoy himself continually, if this be his all ; if his heart is set on these things, while he lives in sin, neglects his soul, and is alienated from the life of God. The remembrance of such a carnal state will be the hell of hell. Remorse for such cursed folly is “ the worm that never dies,” and will add fuel to the fire that shall never be quenched. La-

zarus had all his evil things on earth. He had borne the cross, as every one must do, who follows Christ. Not that he was sated by his poverty and afflictions. There is no merit in these things. Christ alone can save us from our sins; and there are many who are miserable here, who will be miserable also in hell. But Lazarus was a pardoned sinner, and was born of God. Perhaps his afflictions led him to God; and it is happy for poor people when their troubles are sanctified to them, when they learn the evil of sin in the evil of suffering, and having no comfort of a worldly kind, seek comfort in the knowledge of Christ and true religion.

“And besides all this, said Abraham, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence;” ver. 26. Awful separation! Now saints and sinners meet in the same church; but the distinction will soon be made, and no more intercourse be suffered for ever. The kindest relation, the dearest friend, cannot come to speak one word of comfort to the lost soul; nor can the prisoner of hell ever make his escape, or obtain a release for a single hour. But though the miseries of the damned admit of no relief, they are capable of addition. Should their relations come thither, seduced to sin by their counsel or example, it would add to their torments. This was what Dives dreaded, and therefore he cries to Abraham, ver. 27, 28. “I pray thee, therefore, Father, that thou wouldst send him to my father’s house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.”

Dives felt the hell which he formerly disbelieved. He had made a jest of hell many a time, and laughed at the fears of religious people, and their pains to avoid it. He had taught his brothers to do the same; and encouraged by his example to persist in a sinful course, he had reason to expect each of them would follow him to hell, accuse him as their tempter, and charge their ruin to him. This, he knew, would increase his sufferings.

Let this be a warning to those who encourage their acquaintance to drunkenness, whoredom, dishonesty, or other

sins. Great is the guilt of enticing others to sin, and great will be their torment, when a new sufferer arrives to lay his ruin at their door.

Ver. 29. "Abraham saith unto him, they have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." From this answer it is plain, that in the judgment of Christ there was enough in the Scriptures of the Old Testament to convince men that there is another life after this; a future state of rewards and punishments, whatever some pretend to the contrary. It was the privilege of the Jews to have this testimony; it was sufficient for their conviction; and it was the sin and ruin of those who disregarded it. We, my friends have the same advantage, and a much greater added to it. We have Christ, the Evangelists and the Apostles; let us hear them.

Dives was not satisfied with this reply, but said, ver. 30. "Nay, Father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." He carries with him to hell the same slight thoughts he had of the Bible when on earth. He presumes to be wiser than God, and to dictate a more effectual mean of conversion than God was pleased to appoint. It is as if he had said, "They do not mind the Bible; its doctrines, commands, and threatenings, are grown familiar to them; nay, they make a jest of it all. But an apparition would startle them: if Lazarus, whom they knew to be a good man, were to appear to them, and tell them how happy he is in heaven, and how miserable I am in hell, they would be alarmed, converted, and forsake their sins."

Observe, now, the final answer that Abraham gives— "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." This answer well suits the present times; when many wicked men, with a boldness unknown in former days, try to rob us of our Bibles, and cheat us out of eternal life. There is nothing new, my friends, under the sun. The Devil began his works of destruction by persuading Eve to disbelieve the word of God. He has carried on his murderous designs by the same means ever since: and he is making a bold push, by his infamous agents at this day, to keep people in their sins, by denying the truth of Scripture, and so

taking away all motives to true religion, arising from the hope of heaven or the fear of hell.

Consider for a moment *what* the Scriptures testify—*Why* we should receive their testimony, and—that if *their* testimony is rejected, no other would be effectual.

The Scriptures certainly testify that the soul of man does not die with the body—that there is a glorious heaven, and a dreadful hell. It seems that Dives laughed at all this, perhaps you do. Certainly he did not believe it, or why should Lazarus be sent to certify it to his brethren? Had he believed it, he would have led a very different life: he would not have lived a life of luxury, but a life of self-denial and holiness; nor could he have been so hard-hearted to the poor. Do we believe there is a hell for sinners? We shall fly from the wrath to come. Do we believe there is a heaven for the people of God? We shall strive to enter in. Let our practice, sirs, prove whether we are believers or infidels. Where there is faith there must be works. All the rest is *hypocrisy*.

The Scriptures also testify that all mankind are, by the fall of Adam, in a polluted, apostate state: guilty before God, and exposed to his dreadful anger. But they also testify that God has so loved the world as to send his Son to be a Saviour—to satisfy divine justice by shedding his blood; and that he has sent his Spirit also to renew by his grace the hearts of men, and make them new creatures: and that whoever believes in the Son of God shall not perish in hell, but be saved from sin and brought to glory. Many other things the Scriptures teach, but these are the greatest.

Now, my brethren, if we are asked why we believe these things? we are able to give a reason of the hope that is in us. There is no evidence, that an unbeliever, like Dives, can now desire, that has not already been given. Dives asked for a miracle, God wrought many miracles by Moses, and more by Jesus Christ; and these are more credible than the apparition of a deceased friend would be. Moses performed many miracles in Egypt and the Wilderness; for the truth of which he appeals to the whole multitude of Israel. Now, is it possible that a million of people could be persuaded that they saw and heard things

which they did not see nor hear? Would they not have contradicted him? Could they, for instance, have believed that they had passed through the Red Sea, and that they had subsisted upon manna, in a miraculous manner, for many years, and their garments had not worn out, if no such things had happened?

But not to dwell on Moses or the prophets, let us consider the wonderful works of Jesus Christ; who, by the way confirms the character of Moses; so that the character of Moses and of Christ must stand or fall together.

Jesus Christ appealed to his miracles for the proofs of his mission. To the disciples of John, who enquired whether he were the true Messiah or not, he said, "Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them," Matt. xi. 4, 5. All these things are truly miraculous, and such as Divine Power alone is able to perform: but they were perfectly easy to him, and they fully proved his divine authority. These things were not done in a corner; they were done openly, and some of them before thousands of witnesses. His great enemies, the Jews, could not, did not, deny them; they only wickedly ascribed them to the power of the Devil. The Evangelists wrote an account of these miracles in the very country where they were performed, and near the time; so that if they had not been done, thousands would have risen up and contradicted their testimony. The apostles went forth into various countries, preaching the Gospel of Christ, and confirming its truth by their miraculous works; and surely they cannot be accused of priestcraft. Did not they, as well as the prophets, forfeit the esteem of men, and endure great hardships, even death itself? And was not their whole conduct an evidence of their sincerity?

But our faith does not rest only on the miracles. Prophecy, or predicting events long before they happened, is a proof equally strong. We could give many unanswerable proofs of this kind, but our limits forbid.

The excellent effects of the Christian religion, wherever it is truly received, is another argument in its favour. We

daily see, that by the preaching of the Gospel sinners are converted to God ; that bad men are made good men ; they become " new creatures," as the Scripture calls them. So it was at the first ; some of the greatest persecutors became Christians, and whole nations forsook their idols ; and thousands in those nations forsook their detestable practices, and became sober, just, devout, and benevolent. Now, this is a continued miracle ; we see it wrought to this day. May God give you, my friends, to know the power of divine truth in your own hearts, and its holy influence upon your temper and conduct, and then you will bear the witness or testimony in yourselves to the truth of Christianity ; and this will be more satisfactory than all other evidences put together.

And now say, my friends, if any other, any new testimony is wanting, to confirm the truth of Scripture. Dives wished that a person might rise from the dead to convince his brethren ; and perhaps there are some people in England who would wish the same. Suppose God should grant their wish. Suppose that in the silent hours of darkness something should appear, something exactly like one of our friends, whom we knew was dead, and buried a month before. Suppose he should say, " I am such an one—I am come to tell you that there is a holy God—there is a glorious heaven—there is a dreadful hell.—For-sake your sins, and believe in Jesus, or you will perish for ever !" What effect do you think, such a vision would have ? Probably it would frighten you to death ; or if you survived it, and were deeply impressed with it, it is likely that the cares and pleasures of life would wear off the impression in a little time. As to your friends, they would not believe you ; they would try to laugh or reason you out of your fancies ; they would say it was a dream, or you were mad ; and if your heart were not changed by grace, you would yourself begin to doubt, and judge that you were somehow or other imposed upon ; so would you remain just what you are, or perhaps become worse.

But not to argue on suppositions, let us resort to matter of fact. The experiment has been tried, and was ineffectual. You remember to have read, in the 11th of John, an account of the resurrection of another Lazarus, who

lived and died at Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem. Jesus Christ went to his tomb, and, in the presence of many people, cried aloud, "Lazarus, come forth;" the dead heard the voice of the Son of God and lived; he that had been dead four days came forth in his shroud, and walked home to his house. This miracle was never denied; it was acknowledged and dreaded by the chief priests and rulers: the neighbours saw him, conversed with him, ate and drank with him; but what effect had it? Some indeed believed; others turned informers, and went and told his enemies, who said, "this man doth many miracles; if we let him alone, all men will believe on him." From that day, therefore, they sought to murder him. So that we see outward evidence alone, however strong, is insufficient of itself to produce faith in the carnal heart.

Take another instance. Our Lord Jesus often declared that he would rise again upon the third day after his death. The appointed hour arrived, and behold there was a great earthquake, the Saviour rose, the keepers, the soldiers were terrified, they became as dead men! But were *they* converted? No; the chief priests and elders hired the soldiers, who saw the resurrection, to tell a lie, and say, that while they slept, the disciples of Jesus stole him away. A foolish lie it was, for, if they were asleep, as they pretended, how could they know what happened? and if not asleep, the pretended robbery was impossible: for it proves that the most sensible, the most awful evidence will not convince or convert men, without the concurrent operation of the Holy Spirit. In like manner, we might shew that the most singular and awful providences, such as the death of near relations, and remarkable escapes from death, and the most dreadful views of eternity, and the most solemn vows and resolutions made at such times, prove insufficient to make men truly religious.

Let us now hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Be thankful for your Bible; prize your Bible; read and study your Bible daily, praying to God to give you his Spirit, that you may rightly understand it, and be thereby made wise to salvation. Avoid bad books and bad men as you would poison. Regard not their objections; they can *make none that have not been answered a thousand times.*

Their cavils are mere trifling, like a man who despises such a building as St. Paul's church, on account of a small flaw or two in the surface of a stone. The Scriptures are fulfilling daily before your eyes ; and the very objections of infidels are a proof of their truth ; for, as our Saviour declared, " Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil ;" and this is the grand source of infidelity, ancient and modern. Sinners are against the Bible, because the Bible is against them.

Read this parable again when you go home ; and learn from it not to envy sinners, however rich and prosperous. Repine not at poverty ; but pray it may be sanctified to your soul's benefit. Be content with the evidence God has given you of a future state ; be concerned, by faith in Jesus, to avoid the miseries of hell ; and to be made meet, by the grace of God, to enjoy, with all the redeemed, the unspeakable joys of the heavenly world, for ever and for ever. God grant this may be the happiness of each of us, for Christ's sake. Amen !

SERMON XXV.

THE PLEASURES OF RELIGION,

(Addressed particularly to youth.)

Prov. iii. 17. *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

IT is a maxim admitted by all the world, that " Every one is drawn by pleasure." But it is the misery of our fallen nature, that we are not drawn so much by the *best* pleasures, as by the *worst* ; that the pleasures we generally prefer end in pain ; and that the pleasures we commonly neglect are such as would make us happy for ever.—

These are the pleasures of religion, called in our text, *the ways of wisdom* ; by which we may understand the ways prescribed to us by Christ, who is WISDOM itself, and the pursuit of which is the true wisdom of man ; for " the

fear of the Lord, that is wisdom ; and to depart from evil, that is understanding."

All men seek happiness ; but few know where to find it. They may be compared to a number of seamen, sailing from different ports, in quest of a very rich and beautiful country, which they have heard much of, but never saw ; and the greater part of whom set out without a map or a compass : Is it any wonder if few of them ever reach the desired spot ? Just so it is with young persons who are eagerly desirous of pleasure ; they are willing to take any pains, or run any risk for it ; but they never seriously enquire what is true happiness ; and how may we certainly acquire it ? Now, if we will take Jesus Christ for our counsellor, and "none teacheth like him," he will assure us that "his ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace." Satan indeed says, that the ways of *sin* are pleasantness : so he told Eve. She believed him ; and you know the consequence. Satan also says, that the ways of religion are painful and irksome. But whom will you believe ! the God of truth, or "the father of lies ;" he that "cannot lie," "or he that deceiveth the whole world ?" God's testimony is true ; and it is confirmed by ten thousand witnesses. All the good men that ever lived will bear witness to the pleasures of religion ; yea, the death-beds of wicked men are constrained to confess the same.

Let us now consider, what the pleasures of religion are ; and we may rank them under the following heads ;

1. *The possession of Christian graces.* 2. *The enjoyment of Christian privileges ;* and 3. *The performance of Christian duties.*

1. The possession of *Christian graces* is a source of pleasure.

The great thing which distinguishes a real Christian from another man is, his having the Spirit. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his ;" and whoever has the Spirit, has the seal of God, and the earnest of heaven. "The water that I shall give him," said Christ, when speaking of the Spirit, "shall be in him, a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." Now, the Spirit of God is the author of a new and divine life in *the soul of a believer.* He is born of God. He is a new

creature. Every grace is implanted in the soul ; the exercise of which is natural, and pleasant to the new nature as the due exercise of our senses is to the natural man.

Knowledge ; the knowledge of God in Christ is pleasant. It is to the soul, what the light of the sun is to the body. " Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." St. Paul, who was blessed with this knowledge, " counted all things but loss for the excellency of it ;" and was so delighted with it, that " he determined to know nothing else."

Faith is a present grace. It gives subsistence to things unseen. It realizes the world to come. It beholds Jesus, though invisible to the carnal eye. It sees him on the cross, and on the throne ; and seeing him, it " rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory." This is the grace that receives the promises : the " exceeding great and precious promises," and derives infinite sweetness and satisfaction from them.

Repentance has its pleasures too—our Lord himself being judge. " Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." If there be any thing in religion that seems unpleasant, it is this ; and yet there is more satisfaction in the tears that are shed for our sins, than there was pleasure in the commission of them. Besides, " he that sows in tears shall reap in joy ;" and it is far better to smart for sin on earth, than to burn for it in hell.

Hope is certainly a pleasant grace. Hope is the cordial of life. The believer's hope is well founded. It is " a good hope, through grace;" not the hope of the hypocrite, which is a flash of light, followed by the blackness of eternal darkness. It is " a lively hope," that shall never make ashamed, for it is founded on Jesus, the Rock of ages.

Love is undoubtedly pleasant—the Love of God. God reconciled in Christ, is the proper object of the creature's love. All the misery that mortals ever knew is in consequence of forsaking God, and transferring their love to sin ; nor can true happiness ever be known, till the soul returns to God. The love of our neighbour, too, affords unspeakable pleasure. There is no luxury upon earth equal to that of doing good. It resembles the happiness of God himself.

2. The enjoyment of *Christian privileges* is another spring of religious pleasure.

It is the Christian's privilege to have *peace with God*, through faith in the blood of Christ. Whoever, under a sense of his sin and misery, flies to the refuge of the Saviour's arm, is gladly received, and freely pardoned. In the fountain of his blood, he is washed from all sin. In the righteousness of Jesus, he is justified from all accusations. He is no longer in a state of condemnation; he has "passed from death unto life." And what condition can equal this? If a number of prisoners were in jail under sentence of death, and one was brought out by the king's pardon, who would be thought happy? the pardoned man, though clothed with rags, or the criminals within, though clothed with purple, and faring sumptuously every day? The pardoned man, however poor, would be reckoned far happier than the condemned malefactors, however rich. And so in this case—"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." A sense of this in the conscience is the greatest happiness upon earth; it is "the peace that passeth all understanding." And it is sad to think that the greater part of mankind live without this; and are deluding themselves with a *false* peace—for "there is no peace to the wicked," or none but the devil's peace. O, how can wicked men enjoy themselves at all? If their eyes were open, they would be like *Belshazzar* at his impious feast: the hand-writing upon the wall spoilt all his mirth. So would it be with the ungodly man at the play-house, the card-table, the alehouse, or the dancing room: he would see *Sin, Wrath, Death, Judgment* and *Hell*, written, as it were, in flaming letters on the wall; he would tremble with fear, and take no rest, till he obtained the blessed privilege, "peace with God," by the blood of Christ.

This holy calm sometimes swells into sacred *Joy*, yea, "Joy unspeakable and full of glory:" for the kingdom of God is not only "righteousness and peace, but *joy* in the Holy Ghost." What joy results to a believer from the consideration of the hell he has escaped, the pardon he has obtained, the grace he has received, and the glory which awaits him! Every thing that can contribute to human

joy, and ten thousand times more, unite to make him a happy man. The contemplation of Christ alone is enough. What wonders of grace and glory meet in him. All that is great, noble, amiable, heavenly, is seen in Jesus. All power, wisdom, patience, grace, mercy, love and faithfulness, are combined in him. "He is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." And when the believer can add, "This is MY beloved, and this MY friend?" his joy is full. And well may that object create bliss in the heart, which is the heaven of heaven above; for we have no higher ideas of celestial felicity, than that it consists in "being with Christ, and beholding his glory."

What a privilege is *Adoption* into the family of God! "To as many as have received Christ, he hath given power to become the sons of God." And O, "what manner of love is this!" Pardoned rebels taken into the house of God, into the arms of God, yea, into the heart of God! "I will be a FATHER unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." And this is not a formal title, or an empty name, like many of those nominal honours which distinguish the sons of men: No. It is connected with freedom of access into a father's presence; holy boldness and familiarity as with a parent; a constant share of his tender love, gracious communications, and providential bounty. He, who created and governs the world, bids us "cast all our care upon him," unbosom all our sorrows, and commit all our concerns for time and eternity to his management, for he "careth for us." He promises never to forget us; to withhold no good thing from us; and to make all things work together for our good.

These are some of the believer's privileges in *life*. But religion never shews its real value more than in a *dying hour*. And then nothing else avails. Wicked men, who have despised it all their lives, are forced at last, to have recourse to its *forms*; and in general, they who have lived without its power, are contented and *cheated* with its forms when they die. They bear, however, a strong testimony to the excellency of religion; for, commonly, "Men may live fools, but fools they cannot die." Like wretched Balaam, they wished "to die the death of the righteous;" but most

men die as they live. Yet divine grace has wrought miracles of mercy at the eleventh hour.

But, O, the privilege of dying in the Lord. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." Mark the end of the Christian; it is peace. The God whom he has feared and loved, and served, will not forsake him now. The Saviour who died for him will support him in dying. Death has lost its sting; and blessed is the death of him that has an interest in the death of Christ.

Our limits oblige us very briefly to run over the Christian's privileges; let us open another source of his pleasures, namely,

3. The performance of *Christian duties*. Of these, *Prayer* is the first and chief. "Behold he prayeth!" was the first mark of Paul's conversion. And this is so pleasant to the Christian, that he cannot live without it. As well might a man live without breathing, as a Christian without praying. He esteems it a blessed privilege to "call upon the Lord in the day of trouble," and to be graciously heard and delivered. He loves the Lord, who heard the voice of his supplication, and determines to call upon him as long as he lives. The duty of *Praise* is also very pleasant. It is not only a comely but a *pleasant* thing to be thankful. "Is any man merry," saith St. James, "let him sing Psalms." Singing the praise of God with the heart is a delightful service, a kin to the joys of heaven. *Reading and hearing the word of God* is also exceedingly pleasant. As new born babes desire the breast, so new born souls desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. "The law of thy mouth," saith David, "is better to me than thousands of gold and silver. How sweet are thy words to my taste, yea sweeter than honey to my palate! They are more to me than my necessary food." Yes, whoever is born of God, loves the word; and whoever dislikes it, cavils at it, neglects it, has a sure evidence of being in a carnal state. *The Lord's day*, and the public ordinances of God's house, are very pleasant to a believer. From his very soul, he calls the Sabbath "a delight, holy of the Lord, and honourable;" he esteems "a day in his courts is better than a thousand;" he is "glad, when it is said, Let us go up to the house of the Lord,

and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths." O, if poor carnal sinners knew the pleasures of the godly in the worship of their Lord, they would be ashamed of their poor, mean, idle, worldly amusements, and gladly forsake them for the more solid, refined, and heavenly joys of the children of God. These are but a small part of the Christian's pleasures. We might add, his sacred joy at the table of the Lord; his sweet meditations on divine subjects; his profitable conversations with fellow Christians; the supports he finds under afflictions; and the prospects he enjoys of eternal felicity.

And as all these are good and pleasant *in themselves*, so they appear to greater advantage, if you *compare* them with the pleasures of the world. They are certainly far more *solid* and *satisfying*; far more *rational* and *noble*; and, above all, far more *durable*. "The most innocent of our carnal pleasures, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, and the like, are the badges of our weakness, and a sort of reproach upon our nature; and it is our inclination to them, rather than any excellence in them, that makes them alluring." They are needful, it is true, at present; but when our nature shall be glorified, we shall be "as the angels," and require none of these things. And when a man places his happiness in sensual pleasures, and carries them to excess in gluttony, drunkenness, uncleanness, and so on, he becomes a brute rather than a man, and the scripture pronounces him, *dead while he liveth*. "The good man is satisfied from himself;" he has an inward source of joy; but the carnal man, who roves abroad for happiness, is never satisfied. "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing." The best of his pleasures perish in his using. Solomon says, "As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool"—a noisy blaze, and soon over. Let a wise man listen to the impertinent, vain, foolish, proud, profane conversation of a set of gay and loose people in a tavern; what a mass of nonsense and wickedness does it appear? and could it be written down, and shewn to the company themselves, surely, they would be ashamed of it! How childish are the amusements of the card-table! How strange, that a number of rational and

immortal beings should spend hours upon hours in playing with bits of painted paper ! How ridiculous for a company of grown people to be jumping and running about a room in their dancing assemblies ! How foolish for thousands of men and women to trail many miles to a race-ground, just to see one horse's head before another ! Not to mention other pleasures of the world, which are as *criminal* as they are *mean*, which will by no means bear reflection, but fill the mind with painful remorse. Ah ! what real pleasure can that man enjoy, who is forced to look back on the past with regret, and the present with confusion, and the future with dread and dismay. The carnal pleasure-taker is a hypocrite in his mirth. "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful ; and the end of that mirth is heaviness." It is recorded in the life of Colonel Gardiner, that before his conversion, when he gave a loose to all his carnal passions, and lived in many guilty pleasures, when he was thought by his companions so happy, that they called him the *happy rake* ; he was even then so miserable, at times, through the stings of his conscience, that he has envied a dog that came into the room, wishing rather to have been that dog, than a man, who "must give an account of himself to God." This is just what wise and holy Job long ago observed—"Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth ; though he hide it under his tongue ; though he spare it, and forsake it not, but keep it still with his mouth ; yet his meat in his bowels is turned ; it is the gall of asps within him." How just is the comparison ! Sin is the *food* of a carnal man ; it is his meat and drink, to do the will of his father which is in hell. This food is very sweet to him, sweeter than honey and the honey-comb ; so sweet that he is unwilling to lose the relish of it, but tries to enjoy it, as long as possible. But what is the consequence ? Is this sweet food wholesome ? No. It is turned in his bowels to *poison*. It is the *gall of asps* within him. The bite of an asp was deadly. There was no remedy for it : it killed in four hours, and yet it killed with little pain. Thus Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, destroyed herself. Just so the sinner dies ; he may be stupified, and feel no terrors in his soul ; but the bitterness that flows from sin is the bitterness of everlasting death.

APPLICATION.—We have now taken a view of the pleasures of religion, in the possession of Christian graces, the enjoyment of Christian privileges, and the performance of Christian duties. And now dear young people, are you not almost persuaded to be Christians? May God persuade you altogether! If you doubt the truth of what we have asserted, we appeal to Christ himself. Hear him. “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your soul: for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Do you love pleasure? I know you do. Seek it then in Christ’s way, and not in the ways of sin. There is nothing in religion that is really irksome and unpleasant. Even that which seems to be so, as repentance, self-denial, and the mortification of sin is rendered easy by the grace of God. And were it not so, what are the pains of a moment to the pains of eternity.

“Who would not give a trifle to prevent
What he would give a thousand worlds to cure?”

But the fact is, there is far more pleasure in religion now, than there is in sin; and we are sure that it will *end* better. What will it avail any of you an hundred years hence, that you were gay and merry, that you saw every fine sight, and indulged every sensual pleasure? but it will avail you a thousand years hence, that you regard the one thing needful, and “choose the good part.” And let it be observed, that the person who can take no pleasure in religion, is not at all qualified for the joys of heaven, nor could he be happy there if he were admitted. If you can take 1:0 pleasure in the things of God, in singing his praises, in conversing with his people, in observing the Sabbath, what would you do in heaven, where the delights are *not* carnal, such as you love, but wholly spiritual, such as you hate? Does not this convince you that something is wrong? that your state and disposition is not what it should be? “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” It is regeneration that makes the important change in a person’s views *and taste*, for “that which is born of the flesh is flesh” and *therefore* can relish only carnal things; but “that which

is born of the Spirit is spirit," and therefore enjoys spiritual pleasures. O look up to God in earnest prayer, that you may experience this blessed change. Then will sin be the object of your hatred, and holiness that of your delight. Depend upon it you will be no loser by religion. "Godliness is profitable to all things, having the promises of this life, and of that to come." What can you wish for more? While your eternal happiness is secured, you will enjoy "a conscience void of offence towards God and man." Your way may be directed, your crosses sanctified; and your earthly comforts doubled. "O taste and see that the Lord is good."

SERMON XXVI.

THE VALUE OF THE SOUL.

Mat. xvi. 26. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

IN all the Bible, I know not a more weighty sentence than this. Were it duly considered, what a religious world would this become! The disregard of it makes the world that scene of mischief and folly which you behold. To give these words their full force, remember whose they are. They are the words of Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, the Creator of the world. And who so able to determine that the soul is worth more than the world, as he who made them both? He made the soul, and he made the world; yea, the price he paid for the redemption of the soul was his own precious blood. Surely then he **know** the value of the soul. Regard these words, my **friends**, as full of truth, and truth of the greatest importance to yourselves. And O that he who first spoke them to his disciples, may now speak them to our hearts by his Holy Spirit!

In the text there are three things which require our attention:

I. Every man has a soul of the greatest value.

II. *There is a possibility of a man's losing his soul, yea, great danger of it.*

III. The whole world can make no amends for the loss of the soul.

I. Every man has a soul of the greatest value.

The nature of the human soul is, at present, but imperfectly known. God has not told us so much about it, as to gratify our curiosity ; but enough to assist our faith. From the Scriptures alone we learn any thing satisfactory concerning our souls ; and there we find that the soul is a something distinct from the body ; a thinking immortal substance ; and capable of living separately from the body in another world. This appears from Matt. x. 28. where our Lord says to his disciples—" Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul ; but rather fear him, which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." In like manner, we learn from the parable of Dives and Lazarus, that the soul of the former was tormented in hell, while his body lay buried in earth. Jesus Christ assured the penitent thief on the cross, that he should be with him that very day in paradise, while, as we know, the body of Jesus was laid in the tomb. It is said of Judas, *that he went to his own place*, which certainly was hell ; but his wretched carcase was on earth. St. Paul declared, that death would be *gain* to him, because, when *absent from the body*, he should be *present with the Lord* ; useful as he was in the church, and happy in that usefulness, he rather desired to die, to depart, *to be with Christ*, which was far better.

Now this immortal soul is of immense value: and its excellency may be argued from the following considerations :

1. Its *origin* ; it came immediately from God. Something peculiar is said of the formation of man, Gen. i. 26. " God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness." Surely it was the soul of man, rather than his earthly body, that bore the divine resemblance.

2. Consider again the vast and noble *powers* of the soul. When these powers are assisted by learning, how does the philosopher survey, measure, and describe the heavenly bodies, or search into the hidden secrets of nature. And in an ordinary way, how skilfully does the mechanic form various instruments and engines for the common purposes of life. The farmer cultivates and improves the earth, and

produces from it the foodful grain. Artificers of various names furnish us with useful and ornamental articles of clothes and furniture : while the scholar, like the industrious bee, collects the wisdom of all countries and ages. And what is far better, the soul is capable, by divine grace, of knowing God, by being renewed in his holy image, of paying him cheerful service, and of enjoying him for ever in a better world.

2. Once more, consider the worth of the soul in the amazing *price* paid down for its *redemption*. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver or gold ; but with the precious blood of Christ, 1. Pet. i. 18, 19. Thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil, would not have sufficed : nothing but the blood of the Lamb of God could atone for sin.

"The ransom was paid down : the fund of heav'n,
Heaven's inexhaustible, exhausted fund,
Amazing, and amaz'd, pour'd forth the price,
All price beyond !"—

Surely the ransom-price of the soul bespeaks its infinite value. O let us learn to value our souls !

4. Consider again, the *contention of heaven and hell* for the soul of man. Heaven from above invites us to come to God. Jesus Christ came down on purpose to shew us the way ; yea, to be himself the way. The ministers of the Gospel "watch for souls ;" for this they study and pray, and travel and labour, that they may snatch perishing souls from the devouring flames. They are "instant in season and out of season," and are "all things to all men," that they may win some. Your serious relations, friends, and neighbours, long for your conversion ; for this purpose they pray for you, speak to you, and lend you books. Yea, the angels of God are waiting around us, longing to be the messengers of good news to heaven, that sinners are repenting on earth.

On the other hand, it is the business of the devil to tempt and destroy the souls of men. As a subtle serpent he lies in wait to deceive, or as a roaring lion he roams about to destroy. Gladly would he seduce you into sin by the love of pleasure, or get you to neglect salvation by the love of business, or prejudice your minds against the

Gospel of life. What is the reason that preaching the Gospel is so much opposed; and storms of persecution raised against it? Satan is afraid of losing his prey. I know that "the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation;" he would, therefore, keep men from hearing it, lest any should be "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of the devil to God." Learn then the value of your souls, from the strife there is between heaven and hell to obtain them; and say, whether you would wish to gladden angels or gratify devils?

5. Above all, consider the immense value of the soul in that vast *eternity* of bliss or woe that awaits it. We are but in an embryo state at present, like a bird in the egg, or an infant in the womb. We shall soon die into eternity. We shall soon begin a state of being that will never end. The present life is merely the seed-time of eternity, and 'what a man soweth that also shall he reap: he that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity'—he shall meet with nothing but disappointment. 'He that soweth to the flesh shall reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall reap life everlasting.' Gal. vi. 20. Consider the endless duration of a soul, the happiness or misery of one saved or damned sinner will be far greater than the temporal happiness or misery of all the inhabitants of England for a hundred years. Eternity stamps infinite value on the soul; and this is the reason of the comparison made in our text between one single soul and the whole world, and of the question proposed in it, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" The expression seems to allude to the customs of those countries, which do not use money in their traffic, but exchange one article for another: now, what can be exchanged for the soul? Can any thing be offered of equal value? Certainly not for every thing in this world is temporal, but the soul of man is eternal. How dreadful then its loss! And this leads us to shew,

II. That a man may lose his soul, and that he is in danger of so doing.

The soul of man cannot be lost by *ceasing to be*: for being immortal in its nature, that is impossible. And how gladly would a damned soul cease to be, if it were possible! But for a soul to be lost is, for it to be lost

at happiness, here and hereafter, which is suited to its nature. It is to lose all the present pleasures of religion, the consolation that is in Christ," "the comfort of love," "the peace that passeth all understanding," and the joy of the Holy Ghost, which is unspeakable and full of glory." Whatever Satan and wicked men affirm, we know assuredly that the truly religious man is the only happy man; and, therefore, he who lives without religion, lives without the true happiness of life; and though he may pretend to defy the danger that awaits him, yet conscience will sometimes speak, and in the midst of his sinful mirth will whisper in his ear, "What will all this avail, if thy soul be lost at last?"

But, O, who can tell the fearful import of that word *lost*, as it respects the future and eternal world! I remember a few years ago that a boy, who was sent upon some errand on a cold winter's evening, was overtaken by a dreadful storm, when the snow fell so thick, and drifted in such a manner, that he missed his way; and, continuing several hours in that condition, was ready to perish. About midnight, a gentleman in the neighbourhood thought he heard a sound, but could not distinguish what it was, till, opening his window, he heard a human voice, at a great distance, pronouncing in a piteous tone—*Lost! lost! lost!* The poor boy, in some hope of help, kept crying out at intervals, *lost! lost! lost!* Humanity led the gentleman to find persons diligently to seek for the lad, who was at length found and preserved. Happy for him that he perceived his danger, that he cried for help, and that his cry was heard! So will it be happy for us, if sensible of the value of our souls; and their danger of perishing in hell, to now cry for mercy and help to that dear and gracious friend of sinners," that great and generous deliverer, who "came to seek and to save that which was *lost*."—But if this be neglected, the soul will be lost indeed, lost without remedy, lost for ever. He who is now a *Saviour*, will shortly be a *Judge*, has marked out the characters of the wicked, and has said—"These shall go into everlasting punishment." Awful words *Everlasting punishment!* He will say to them, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his an-

gels." In the fearful expectation of this, a gentleman some years since, who had been a member of parliament and was esteemed an orator, but who had neglected his soul and religion, kept crying out on his dying bed, "Lost, lost, my soul is lost for ever!"

Now, would we escape this dreadful end? Let us then seriously consider the danger of losing our souls. There is danger of doing so, the word of God abundantly declares. Remember what Christ himself said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat." Is there no danger then? Mark again what is said by the Psalmist. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." The word of God describes the very people. See a list of them in 1 Cor. vi. 9. and mark, whether any of you are there described. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? be not deceived; neither fornicators—nor adulterers—nor effeminate;" that is, persons of lascivious tempers and practices, however private and alone—"nor sodomites—nor thieves—nor covetous—nor drunkards—nor revilers—nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Look over this black catalogue again and if you find your name there, own it. Blush and tremble to think what must it be to be shut out from the kingdom of God, and so lose your own soul; and then say, is it worth while to lose your soul for any of these sinful pleasures and practices? will you with your eyes open, exchange your soul for any of these things?

I find, again, that all *impenitent* persons—all *unconverted* persons—all *unregenerate* persons, and all *neglectors of the Gospel*, will lose their own souls; and that you may be sure of this, I will mention the chapter and verse where it is so declared. All *impenitent* people, Luke xiii. 3. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."—All *unconverted* people, Matt. xviii. 3. "Verily I say unto you except ye be converted, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."—All *unregenerate* people, John iii. 3. "Verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." To these characters we add—All *neglectors of the Gospel*, Heb. ii. 3. "How shall

we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" How can we in our consciences expect to avoid condemnation for our sins, if, through carelessness and unbelief, we despise and reject, or disregard, and do not embrace the Gospel which brings salvation to lost sinners? And again, 2 Cor. iv. 3, "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." The Gospel is a glorious light, and leads sinners to salvation; but if it be *hid*, if it be covered and concealed from the minds of them that hear it, so that they cannot understand or receive it, because of the veil of ignorance and blindness that remains on their hearts, it is a proof of their being yet in the lost and ruined state into which they were plunged by the fall, and, if they die in that state, they will be lost for ever. The apostle adds—"The God of this world," that is, the devil, whom the heathens worship, and carnal men obey, he "hath blinded the eyes of unbelievers, lest the light of the glorious Gospel should enlighten them." If people who have the Gospel are lost, it is not the fault of the Gospel, but it is owing to men's wilful blindness, and the advantage the devil takes of it to keep them in the way to hell. *Mr. Flavel* illustrates this by the following comparison; "Let us suppose a number of blind men on an island, where there are many smooth paths, all leading to the top of a steep cliff, and these blind men going on continually, in one or other of these paths which lead to the brink of ruin, which they see not, it must needs follow, if they all move forward, the whole number will in a short time perish, the island be cleared, and its inhabitants lost in the bottom of the sea. This is the case of carnal men; they are now in this habitable globe surrounded with the vast ocean of eternity; there are many paths leading to eternal misery, and every man turns to his own way; one to the way of drunkenness, another to the way of swearing, another to the way of lewdness, another to pride, another to covetousness, and so on. Forward they go, not once making a stand, or thinking to what end it will bring them; till, at death, *over they go*, and we hear no more of them in this world. Thus one generation of sinners follows another, and they who come after applaud the miserable wretches that went before them. So hell fills, and the world empties its inhabitants daily into it."

Thus it is plain, that the soul may be lost, and that there is great danger of it. Why else did the Son of God come down from heaven? Why has he sent his Gospel to us? Why else do the ministers of Christ cry aloud and spare not? Why else do they warn every man, and teach every man, but that they may convince sinners of their danger, and prevent them from losing their own souls? We now proceed to shew, that

III. The whole world can make no amends for the loss of a soul.

“What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” It is not here supposed, that it is in the power of any man to conquer or possess the whole world. No man ever yet *saw* all the world, and life would be too short for that purpose. But it is to gain all the riches, honours, delights, and pleasures, that a man can possibly enjoy. It is to have every idea accomplished, every sense gratified. It is to have the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life indulged in the highest perfection. All that can please the palate; the luxuries of all countries collected on the table of the epicure; all the delightful charms of music; all the elegancies and conveniences of a noble palace; all that can gratify the smell and the touch; all the pleasures of imagination, arising from grandeur, beauty, and novelty;—and, supposing all this obtained—Solomon obtained it all. And what a *poor all* it proved—“Vanity and vexation of spirit” was the total amount.

And is this the whole of that for which men risk their souls? Foolish barter! Wretched exchange! Was *Esau* wise, who sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage? Was *Judas* wise, who sold his master, and his own soul too, for thirty pieces of silver? Just as wise is the worldly man, who parts with heaven for the sordid and short-lived pleasures of earth. I remember reading of a woman, whose house was on fire. She was very active in removing her goods, but forgot her child, who was sleeping in the cradle. At length she remembered the babe, and ran with earnest desire to save it. But it is now too late. The flames forbade her entrance. Judge of her agony of mind, when she exclaimed, “O my child, my child! I have sav-

ed my goods but lost my child?" Just so it will be with many a poor sinner, who was all his life "careful and troubled about many things," while "the one thing needful" was forgot. What will it then avail for a man to say—
 "I got a good place, or a good trade, but lost my soul! I got a large fortune, but lost my soul. I got many friends, but God is my enemy. I lived in pleasure, but now pain is my everlasting portion. I clothed my body gaily, but my soul is naked before God." Our Lord exposed this folly in the parable of the worldly rich man, Luke xii. 16, &c. His wealth increased abundantly. He was about to enlarge his barns. And then he promised himself a long life of idleness, luxury, and mirth. "But God said to him, Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Here, for the sake of the body, the soul was forgot. While he was dreaming of years to come, death was at the door; and little did he think "that the next hour his friends would be scrambling for his estate, the worms for his body, and devils for his soul."

APPLICATION.—1. Is the soul so valuable? Then do we act as if we believed it so to be? Are our chief desires and endeavours for the body, or for the soul? It is true, that the business of life, and the support of the body, require our daily care and labour. But God has placed no man in such a state as to allow no time for the care of the soul. One whole day in seven is, by his authority, appointed for the care of the soul and the worship of God. Every man, however busy, finds some time for meals and rest and conversation on other days; and if the heart were set on God and heaven, as it ought to be, many a moment would be found for spiritual exercises, without hindrance to worldly business. Yea, a proper regard to true religion, and the blessing of God procured by prayer, would render worldly business more easy, and more prosperous too. But, were it otherwise, remember the text, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Is it reasonable, think you, that the nobler part, the immortal soul, should have no share in your thoughts and cares and endeavours? Shall the brutal part of man engross all his affections? If it does, the event will be fatal. "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall

die ; but if ye, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

2. Is there danger of losing the soul ? then beware ; be on your guard ; watch and pray, lest you should lose your souls. Remember that sin and ignorance, and carelessness, and unbelief, will certainly ruin the soul. Though the flesh may plead for these things, and you may have the majority of the world on your side, yet God has said, "The end of these things is death."

But why should you lose your souls ? Is there not a Saviour, and a great one ? He came from heaven on purpose to save that which was lost. Do you ask, "What shall I do to be saved ?" We reply, with the Apostle Paul, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." There is no name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, but that of Jesus. He is the only deliverer from the wrath to come. Take care that you trust in nothing else. Make not your good works, as they are called, your dependence. Virtue and morality are excellent things, and promote the peace and welfare of society, but they are not saviours. He that trusts them leans on a broken reed, builds on the yielding sand, and will be woefully disappointed at last. By *grace* alone are sinners saved, through *faith* ; and faith is the gift of God. Many, who have some concern for their souls, perish through their ignorance of Christ. They think themselves moral and devout, and doubt not that God will accept them. But this is a ruinous mistake. Such moral persons are in as much danger as the most profane. This is the fatal stumbling-block of thousands. But know this, Christ alone can save our souls. He must be your wisdom, your righteousness, your sanctification, and redemption ; **your** all in all. Fly then to him without delay. If you would not lose your soul, call upon him to save it. This is his office : He is the SAVIOUR. It is his delight : he waits to be gracious. His open arms are ready to receive the trembling sinner. Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope. Believe in him, and you are safe. You may then say, with St. Paul, I know whom I have believed, *and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him,*" namely, the immortal soul, with

all its eternal concerns *against that day*, the day of final judgment. Yea, you may say,

“Firm as the earth thy Gospel stands,
My Lord, my hope, my trust :
If I am found in Jesus’ hands,
My soul can ne’er be lost.”

Finally. Can the whole world make no amends for the loss of a soul? then prize the world less, and the soul more. Learn to think of the world now as you will think of it on a dying bed. “A dying man would give all the world for his soul; when in health he does not so much as think of it. Whilst he is able, he will do nothing at all; and he would fain do all, when he is no longer able to do any thing. What strange delusion is this! will mankind never recover from it, after so many fatal examples?” Be moderate in your pursuit of the world. “Be diligent in business,” but take care to be “fervent in spirit” also. Time is short; eternity is long. Live for eternity. Show your regard for your souls, by earnestness and diligence in all the means of grace. If you prize your souls, you will prize Sabbaths, and Bibles, and Sermons, and Prayers, and serious friends. *Redeem then the time.* “Hear the voice of God while it is called to-day; for this is the acceptable time; this is the day of salvation. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Were religion painful and miserable; still, as necessary to eternal happiness, it would be your wisdom to be religious; but to be religious is to be happy now and happy for ever. On the contrary, the wicked man is miserable now, and will be miserable for ever. So that the choice which is proposed to every man on this subject is this: “Will you have a foretaste of heaven now, and then heaven for ever; or will you have a foretaste of hell now, and then hell for ever?” “*Will you have two hells, or two heavens?*”

SERMON XXVII.

CONVICTION OF SIN.

1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. If all prophecy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

IN these words we have an account of the power of the Gospel in the times of the apostles. We see here what was the design and effect of the word of God in primitive times. And it should be our concern that the same Gospel may be blessed in the same manner among ourselves. In those early days there were *miraculous gifts* in the church: for instance, speaking in a language which they had never learned; and this was to enable the preachers to address themselves to the people of all nations. It was then reckoned very honourable to possess the *gift of tongues*, and some coveted it too much. St. Paul, in this chapter, shews that it was far more desirable to *prophecy* or *preach*: "Follow after love," saith he, "and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophecy; for he that prophesieth, (or preacheth) speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." And, in our text, he mentions the blessed effects of preaching, in the conversion of a person to God. He supposes a case, which no doubt often happened: A heathen, or other ignorant person, led by curiosity, happens to come into an assembly of christians, in a house, or barn perhaps, wishing to see or hear something of this new religion; he listens to what one or other of the preachers drops, and, the Spirit of God opening his eyes, and touching his heart, he is convinced that he is a sinner, he feels himself condemned, he is surprised to find the secret thoughts of his heart laid open; and so, struck with an awe of the Divine Majesty, he earnestly implores the mercy of God, and is convinced that God is, in a special manner, present with his people.

True religion is always the same. The Gospel is always the "power of God;" and when he is pleased to own and *bless the preaching* or reading of it, the same blessed effects are produced. Men are fully convinced of sin, and con-

verted to God. The Lord grant that such may be the effect of his word among us at this time !

I. We may first observe, that *Preaching the Gospel is an ordinance of God, and constantly used in the primitive church.* Our Saviour, when leaving this world, directed his disciples to “go and teach all nations ;”—to “go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature ;” he graciously promised to be with the preachers of it, *even to the end of the world* ; and added this solemn sanction—“He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Thus it appears that believing in Christ is necessary to salvation ; and preaching the Gospel is generally necessary to believing, for “how shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed ? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard ? and how shall they hear without a preacher ?” Despised as preaching the Gospel was at first, and still is by many, “it hath pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe,” Mark xvi. 16. Rom. x. 14. 1 Cor. i. 21. A portion of this blessing may be expected by all those who meet together, at any time or place, for reading or hearing the Scriptures, or the explanation of them, with a view to their own edification, or that of their neighbours. May we enjoy it now !

II. Curiosity frequently led persons to the Christian assemblies. The religion of Christ made a great stir in the world. The true knowledge of God was so lost in general, that wherever the Gospel was first preached, it excited great attention ; it seemed a new religion ; it brought strange things to men’s ears. Some were greatly prejudiced against it. Many false and malicious reports were spread, and when it was brought to a town, some would say—“The men that turn the world upside down are come here also.” Men who loved sin, and lived in sin, disliked the light of the Gospel, because it discovered their evil deeds. And persons long used to superstition, error, and devil worship, were unwilling to forsake their own religion, as they called it. But when they saw miracles performed before their eyes ; when they saw numbers of sick people *healed with a word or a touch* ; when they saw some of

their neighbours forsake the altars of their idols, and come moral and lovely in their conduct, they were fit to stop, and consider how these things could be, and of them would of course go and hear for themselves. Our text supposes such a thing; "If there come i that believeth not, or one unlearned," an unbeliever infidel; or an ignorant person, one unacquainted Christ and salvation. God often over-ruled this curiosity for good. *Zaccheus*, a rich publican, was much to see Christ when he passed through Jericho only wanted to gratify his curiosity in seeing a man was so much talked of; but Christ in mercy called converted him. It is good to be near Christ; he meets with those who are "in the way," and "is by those who sought him not." And it is happy many that they did not suffer their own prejudice the fear of man, to prevent their going among sinners, to hear and judge for themselves.

III. We observe further, that *primitive preaching, a tendency to convince men of their being sinners, state of guilt and danger.*

It was a principal part of the work of the prophets, to cry aloud and testify against the sins of the people. John the Baptist preached repentance. So did our Lord himself. And he commanded that "*repentance and remission of sins* should be preached in his name among all nations"—*repentance*, in order to *remission*. As "the need not the physician, but the sick;" as the disease must be felt before the remedy can be desired; so must a man know the diseased and dangerous state of their souls before they can believe in Christ "to the saving of their souls." Accordingly we find St. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, charging sin upon the people of Jerusalem; the effect of which was, "they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Thus in our text—the unbeliever coming into the assembly, is convinced of *all*, of all his sins; by all the preachers; whoever preached, his doctrine had this tendency, to convince the man of sin. This is done not merely by the power of the word, but by the power of the *Holy Spirit* going along with the word. This is

the great works of the Spirit, as our Saviour promised, John xvi. 8. "When he is come he shall reprove, or convince the world of sin;" it is the same word as in the text; it signifies to convince by way of argument; to stop the mouth of the guilty person, convict him by his own conscience, and leave him without excuse.

The word of God is the chief mean of convincing people of sin. Reason and conscience alone are not sufficient. It is true, that those who "have not a written law, or the Bible, are a law unto themselves; they shew the work of the law written in their hearts," and their consciences accuse them when they do evil, and excuse them when they do well; but all this is done in a weak and imperfect manner. The light of nature discovers *some* sins, but not *all*. It discovers scarcely any sins but those that hurt our neighbour. It discovers that there is a God, and that he should be worshipped, but it does not tell us how. It does not tell us half the duties we owe to God, and therefore not half the sins we commit in not performing them. The light of nature does not shew us the *root* of sin, in our fallen nature. It does not shew us, what *hearts* we have, "deceitful and desperately wicked," as they really are. It cannot shew us that a lustful glance, an angry thought, or a covetous desire, is sinful, as our Lord, in his Sermon on the Mount, declares them all to be. Besides, natural conscience is often stupid and unfaithful. When men live long in sin, the conscience becomes callous and unfeeling, "seered, as it were, with an hot iron." It is corrupt, like all the other powers of our souls, and is too weak and feeble, without superior aid, to convince us, in a due manner, of our sinful and dangerous condition.

THE LAW OF GOD, contained in the ten commandments, is an instrument of mighty power, in the hand of the Spirit, to convince men of sin. The *word* of the law, as printed in a book, or laid up in the memory, or fixed up in a church, are not of themselves sufficient for this purpose. No, they must be spiritually understood, and applied to the heart. St. Paul himself is a notable instance, "I was alive," saith he, "without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." He never was without *the words* of the law, he knew them from a

child—but he was without the true knowledge of the law as a *spiritual* law, requiring “truth in the inward part” and condemning a sinful thought. It was the *tenth* commandment that opened his eyes, “I had not known he saith, “except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet;” by this he saw that a *desire* might be sinful; and so by this, he was convinced of sin. Where natural conscience sees *one* sin, the law shews a *thousand*. What natural conscience thought a *mole-hill*, the law shews to be a *mountain*. What natural conscience thought merely *not quite* right, the law shews to be a daring act of rebellion, and worthy of eternal death.

For besides being “*convinced* of all,” our text says “he is *judged* of all:” he is tried, cast, and condemned. The consideration of his own sin is fixed on his mind; he cannot forget it, he cannot get rid of it. “My sin is before me,” said the Psalmist. It is brought home to his conscience, as when Nathan said to David, “Thou art the man!” The truly convinced sinner receives the sentence of death in himself.” The law says, “the sinner shall die.” The conscience says, “I have sinned, and therefore I must die.” The law says, “I will be true to every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.” The conscience says, “I have not continued in all things, therefore I am condemned.” It is the office of an enlightened conscience to anticipate the judgment of the great day; *Now* to inspect the books that will be opened then, and so to judge ourselves that we may not be judged; so to condemn ourselves that we may not then be condemned. Most men have no notion of the mercy of God, as to forget his justice and holiness; they fortify themselves in his mercy against his justice. But when a person is convinced of sin, he sees that God is holy and just; and he cannot but dread his terrible attributes, till he learns from the Gospel how merciful is at once “a just God and a Saviour: just, yet the Father of the ungodly,” who believeth in Jesus.

IV. Another observation we make on the text: Preaching the word tends to disclose the secret words of the heart, which were unobserved before. *And* the secrets of his heart made manifest.

Most men are so busied in worldly affairs, or stupified with worldly pleasures, that they are great strangers to themselves. They are also lulled asleep by the soft preaching of virtue and morality and sincere obedience, which they flatter themselves they have, so that they give themselves no trouble about religion. But the faithful preaching of God's word has a tendency to rouse men from their supineness. The word of God is a mirror that does not flatter. It shews men their hearts. It does not only tell men what they *ought to be*, but shews them *what they are*. It leads them from observing the streams of their evil actions, to trace them up to the fountain; the corrupt fountain of their fallen nature. Thus when David confesses his sin of adultery, in Psalm li. he acknowledges the spring of this horrid evil. "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." So when our Lord would convince Nicodemus that he *must* be born again, he shewed him, that, "what was born of the flesh, was flesh," nothing more, nothing better, nothing but corruption and defilement; as Paul confesses, "In my flesh there dwelleth no good thing;" and elsewhere, "the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither can it be." So God declared of the old world.—"Every imagination of man's heart is only evil continually." Now a convinced sinner knows this, feels this; and thus "the secrets of his heart are made manifest."—"The Lord opens the root of bitterness; makes us smell the stink of sin; discovers the dunghill whence all these little serpents were bred; shews us the rotten core, as well as the worm-eaten skin; that the *nature* of the person *lies in wickedness*, as a mole in the earth, or a carcass in putrefaction, (1 John v. 19.) all under sin; no good spring in the heart: that there is a poison in the heart that taints every work of the hand, imagination, fancy, thoughts of the mind, and motions of the will. He brings a man from the chamber of outward sins to the closet of inward iniquities, till he arrives at the large room of NATURE; bids him see if he can find out one clean corner in the heart; and so conducts him to the *first sin of Adam*; makes him behold the first fountain whence all issued; and all little enough to make the proud heart stoop to God; this makes a man vile in his own eyes

so that he cannot look upon himself but with confusion and an universal blush." So speaks the excellent M. Charnock.

Persons who have not been used to hear the Gospel are frequently surprised, when they sit under a powerful ministry, to hear their own case and character so exactly described. It is not uncommon for them to charge their friends with having been to the ministers beforehand, to tell them their case. But this is no new thing. The remembrance of one sin leads to the remembrance of another. Sins that have been forgotten many years, have a kind of resurrection in the mind, so that they seem to surround and terrify the soul of an awakened sinner.—Thus it was with the woman of Samaria, who was converted by our Lord at the well; having detected her in the lewd course of life which she led; and being convinced that he was a prophet, she ran to call her neighbours, saying, "Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" This is the proper and powerful effect of the word of God, which carries with it a mighty and convincing argument of its truth, as being the word of him "who searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins of the children of men." The person who thus hears the word to purpose, "knows the plague of his own heart. He boasts no more of a *good heart*. He sees it is full of sin; which he no longer delights in, nor excuses. He sees its horrid evil, described in Scripture as *dirt, dung, plague ulcers*, and putrefying *sores*; and seeing this in his own heart, he loaths himself, and cries with Job, "Lord I am vile! I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!"—And this leads us to another observation.

V. When a man is converted to God, he always begins to pray. The person in our text already convinced of sin—"falls down on his face, and worships God." A blind Pagan till now. If he worshipped before, it was Bacchus or Venus perhaps: or a more heathenish Christian; on who never worships at all. For how many are there among us, who so entirely live *without God in the world*, that they never pray. But see the effect of God's word when carried to the heart. Regardless of the eye of man, he prostrates himself in the dust of abasement before his offended

Maker and Judge. This was the symptom of Paul's own conversion: "Behold he prayeth," said Christ concerning him, as a proof that he was another man; a new man.

It is sad to think that so many people never pray. A short form of words, always the same, and always *unfelt*, is hypocritically offered by some in their beds, or when nearly asleep. By many others their paltry ceremony is quite omitted. Some are ashamed to pray, lest they should be laughed at for it. Others are afraid, lest the devil should appear to them. Others pretend they cannot get a private place to pray in. But let me ask such, Can you not get a private place to sin in? and if you loved prayer as you now love sin, you would not make this excuse. Behold, here, a man so overpowered with a sense of the majesty and justice of God, so deeply affected with his danger as a sinner, and so eagerly desirous of his pardoning mercy, that he forgets he is surrounded by mortals, and he falls down before his God with the publican's petition—"God be merciful to me a sinner!" So have I seen a condemned criminal at a human bar, when the fearful sentence of death has been pronounced, fall down on his knees, and, regardless of the gazing throng, implore the favour of the judge. So have I seen dying persons, expecting soon to appear before God, cry aloud for mercy, without considering who surrounded their beds. The place, or the posture of prayer, is of little consequence. It might disturb the public worship for persons to fall down and pray aloud in our assemblies; yet, when a person is greatly affected, it will be difficult to conceal his emotions. He will lift up his heart, if not his voice, to God. And when he goes home, it will not be with the usual compliment, that he had heard a fine sermon, or a charming preacher; but, retiring to some secret place, he will confess and lament his sins, and seek the pardon of them through the blood of Christ; while, conscious also of their loathsome defilement, he will earnestly crave the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit. One more observation remains.

VI. Converted persons drop all their prejudices against the people of God, and speak honourably of them. "He will report that God is in you of a truth." It is not unlikely that he said before, "the devil is in you." Profane.

people indulge themselves in abusing religious persons. They are fond of calling them nick names; they treat them with contempt and scorn; and sometimes abuse their persons, injure their property, hurt their character, or hinder their employment. Though religion be protected by the laws of the land, there are a thousand ways in which serious people are now persecuted, especially where the Gospel is newly introduced into a place; and the poor, especially, are threatened by their superiors, that they shall be deprived of parish support, or other assistance, if they dare to judge for themselves, and attend the worship of God, where they think themselves profited. But these persecutors, (for that is their true character, if they restrain men in their religion,) ought to remember, that "the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him," Jude 15; for the Lord considers what is done to his people as done to himself; and he says, "it were better for a man to have a mill-stone hung about his neck, and be cast into the sea with it, than for him to offend or hurt one of the least of his disciples, who believe in him." Mark ix. 42.

But no sooner does a man come to himself, and see things as they are, than he forms a very different opinion of godly persons. They are no longer the objects of contempt and scorn. He sees that they are the excellent of the earth, the children of God, and heirs of eternal glory. He now says, "God is in you of a truth." Blessed truth; Jesus is "Immanuel, God with us." He is really and truly with his people, when they meet to pray and praise, and hear his word. "Lo! I am with you always," says he, 'even to the end of the world.' And again, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," Matt. xviii. 20. Blessed be Jesus for this precious promise, and blessed be his name for the fulfilment of it. We know he is with us, to observe, guide, assist, encourage, quicken, approve, and succeed us: yea, he comes first to bid us welcome.—
 "There am I."

Now, every converted person knows and feels this. He therefore says, with Jacob—"How awful is this place; it is the house of God and the gate of Heaven." Observe, it is said, "He will *report* that God is with you." He will not be ashamed to tell the world so: and he will tell it to others, that they may come too. Just as some of our Lord's first disciples did. When *Andrew* was called by Christ, he went and called his brother *Peter*; and when *Philip* was called, he invited *Nathanael*; and when *Nathanael* made some objections, and said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip said, *Come and see.*" In like manner, let all those who have felt the power of God under the word invite their friends and neighbours to hear and judge for themselves.

APPLICATION.—And thus, my friends, we have seen a picture of primitive religion, such as prevailed in the first and best days of Christianity. And now let us enquire, Is our religion like this? Is it thus in our assemblies? Not in all. In some places what irreverence? laughing, ogling, sleeping? The preacher himself is perhaps in fault. Perhaps it is not the Gospel that he preaches; or, he is unaffected by it. He performs his duty as the school-boy his task. The people come expecting nothing; they go away having obtained nothing; and a pious spectator is constrained to reverse the text, and say, "God is *not* here, of a truth."

But where the Gospel of Jesus is faithfully preached, the powerful effects, mentioned in the text, will by the blessing of God, more or less follow. If the doctrine tend "to humble the sinner, to exalt the Saviour, and to promote holiness," Jesus, by his Spirit, is there, and will set his seal to the heavenly truth. Both the law and the Gospel, rightly dispensed, will tend to convince men of their lost and ruined state, to disclose the secret thoughts of the heart; and when this is done, to lead the sinner in earnest prayer to seek salvation by Jesus Christ. Has the word of God had this effect upon us? To know and feel ourselves miserable sinners is the first main point in religion. Without this, we are blind to every thing else in Scripture. Without this, we cannot pray sincerely, or do any thing in religion aright. Sin cannot be taken away till it be disco-

vered ; nor can we ever become what we ought to be till we know what we are. . . And when this is rightly known, you see what follows. You see the convinced sinner prostrate on the ground. Has a sense of sin, an apprehension of its danger, and a hatred of its evil, brought us to our knees ? If so, bless God for it. It is a good beginning. This is the finger of God. Wait upon God ; and he who hath begun the good work will finish it.

What an evidence does this subject afford us of the truth and reality of the religion of Christ. Can any power but that which is divine thus enlighten the mind, convince the conscience, terrify the soul, disclose the secrets of the heart, humble the proud rebel, and at once turn his affections into another channel ? No, no. This is the work of God ; and the Scriptures, by which he effects it, are the word of God, and he who believeth hath hereby " a witness in himself " that they are so. May these blessed truths, so useful and necessary to the conversion and salvation of souls, be every where proclaimed ; and may these, their blessed effects be every where produced ; so shall multitudes be saved, and glory, glory, glory, be given to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

SERMON XXVIII.

THE LAMB OF GOD BEHELD BY FAITH.

John i. 29. Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

THERE is a vast curiosity in the mind of man, and the world abounds with objects to gratify it. The heavens, the earth, the sea, are full of wonders ; and, had not man sinned, he might always have read the book of nature with new delight, and have seen the glory of God in every line. But now, unhappy, fallen man, turns his back upon God, while he surveys his works ; and thinks every trifle better worth his notice than his Maker. In infancy, in youth, in middle life, in old age, a constant succession of vanities courts his attention, and he never thinks of beholding Christ till he dies, and appears before his tribunal.

Like John the Baptist, whose words these are, I would cry aloud and say to my fellow men, *Behold the Lamb of God*—"turn away your eyes from beholding vanities;" and fix your attention on an object the most wonderful, the most pleasing, and the most useful, that the eyes of men or angels ever beheld.

John was the harbinger of Christ, "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord." With strict austerity of manners, and with great plainness of speech he preached repentance—"Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." His honest labours were crowned with great success; and thousands of all descriptions flocked from the cities and towns of Judea into the solitary wilderness, and touched with compunction for their sins, applied to him, saying—"What must we do?" O that, in this our day, we could see such an awakening!

Thus the prophet proceeded, till Jesus Christ entered on the public stage of action, and came forth from the wilderness, where he had suffered all kinds of temptation. John, far from pretending to be the Messiah, directed his disciples to Jesus, saying, in the words of our text, *Behold the Lamb of God*.

In these words let us consider,

I. The great object presented to our view—*The Lamb of God*, and

II. The attention we ought to pay him—*Behold the Lamb!*

I. The object set before us is *Jesus Christ*, here called the Lamb of God.

No doubt the expression alludes to the sacrifices of the Jews, in which consisted a principal part of their worship, as appointed of God himself. In this way God was worshipped from the beginning of the world. We find Abel, the son of Adam, offering up lambs, "the firstlings of the flock, and of the fat thereof," and this was a sacrifice well pleasing to God, because it was offered up in faith. He believed the promise of a Saviour, which God had made to his father; he trusted in him, and was justified. It was for this purpose in the first place, and not for amusement or profit, that Abel was "a keeper of sheep;" and it was probably with the skins of Lambs, killed for sacrifices by

Adam and his wife, that the Lord God clothed them, instead of the covering of fig-leaves which they had made for themselves. Thus, all believers in Jesus are clothed with his righteousness, while blind Pharisees vainly strive to hide the nakedness of their souls with their own "filthy rags." Thus God continued to be worshipped by his own people for four thousand years; even till, "in the fullness of time, God sent forth his own Son," the very person that John here points out as the Lamb of God. And it is remarkable, that almost all nations, however they differed in other notions of religion, retained something of sacrifices. The sons of Noah, wherever dispersed, carried with them this true notion, that "without shedding of blood there was no remission." And many of them mistaking the ancient promises of the great sacrifice of the Son of God, offered up a man as an atonement for their souls. This was practised in England before the Romans conquered it; and is practised still in the newly discovered islands in the South Sea. May God hasten the time, when his glorious Gospel shall be preached in all the world, and every Pagan sinner be directed to the Lamb of God, whose "blood alone cleanseth from all sin."

Various creatures were used in sacrifice by the law of Moses; but the principal and most constant victim was the *Lamb*. One was offered up at the temple every morning, and another every evening; and on the Sabbath-day, two in the morning, and two in the evening. Once a year there was a remarkable ordinance—The Passover. It was first instituted when the children of Israel came out of Egypt. On that dreadful night when God plagued the Egyptians by slaying their first-born, he ordered his own people to kill a lamb, and to sprinkle its blood upon the door-posts of their houses; and when the destroying angel went forth in the night to slay the Egyptians, he should *pass over* the houses so distinguished, and not hurt them. Once a year, ever after, they were to observe the same ceremony; and something like it they still observe. Now we are sure, from the New Testament, that all this was done to preach Christ *unto them*, and especially to us. St. Paul says, 1 Cor. v. 7. *Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us. The paschal*

was without blemish ; Christ was free from all sin, natural or actual. The lamb must be of the first year : Christ laid down his life in the prime of his days. The lamb must be so slain that his blood might copiously flow : the Redeemer shed his blood abundantly, by his agony, the thorns, the scourge, the nails, and the spear ; and according to the type, not a bone of him was broken. In temple service, the lamb was *slain before the whole assembly* ; in like manner our Saviour suffered at great festival in view of the whole assembled nation. The blood of the lamb was sprinkled on the door posts ; the blood of Christ must be applied to the conscience, and is therefore called “the blood of sprinkling.” That blood secured every family where it was sprinkled ; the dying angel was forbidden to hurt them : so the merits of Jesus screen every believer from the stroke of deserved justice, and the bitter pains of eternal death. What saith the pious Hervey on this passage, “What would have become of the Israelite, who, trusting to the rightness of his heart, should neglect to make use of *divinely appointed* safeguard ! He must inevitably have perished with the death of his first-born. Equally ruinous, but infinitely more dreadful, will be *his condemnation*, who, before the omniscient judge, shall presume to doubt his own integrity, or confide in his repentance, and neglect the atonement of the dying Jesus.”

The offering up of sacrifices was the chief part of the religion of the Old Testament church. Sacrifices were to be offered then, nearly, what sacraments are to believers now. Christ the Purifier, Christ the Peace-maker, was the substance of them. The animal offered must be clean, without spot or blemish ; that it might signify the perfect righteousness of Christ, *as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*. The priest laid his hands upon the creature offered in offering, while the sinner confessed his iniquity over the head of the sacrifice ; and thus sin was typically transferred to the victim ; which was therefore called *sin offering*. Thus God “laid upon his Son the iniquities of us all” and he became “*sin* for us, that we might be made *righteousness* in him.” The slain sacrifices were burnt on altar. So Christ was consumed by the flames of his

love for his Father and his people, and at the same time by the flames of the divine wrath against sin, which he had undertaken to bear. There was a sweet-smelling savour of incense that ascended with the flames and smoke; and this was to signify how acceptable to God was the death of his Son, "who gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour," Ephes. v. 2. The *peace-offerings* were not entirely consumed, but the person who offered them might, and did eat of them. A feast was frequently made of them, which was a kind of sacrament of communion; a type of that communion which believers in Christ now have, with him and with one another, in the sacred ordinance of the Lord's supper.

But Jesus Christ is called in our text, *the Lamb of God*. This name is given him by way of eminence, and to shew his *superiority* over every other sacrifice. He is *the Lamb of God*, as he was chosen, appointed and prepared by God the Father, from all eternity. In common sacrifices every man chose his own lamb; here God only chose and appointed. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," that he might be the great sacrifice. His infinite superiority also appears in that he was but *once* offered. Other sacrifices were repeated annually, monthly, yea, daily; this shewed their imperfection, and that they could not, by any virtue of their own, take away sin.—"But this man, after he had offered *ONE* sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; for by *ONE* offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified;" that is—he hath done all that was necessary for the pardon and complete acceptance with God of all those who believe in him, and who were set apart in the purpose of God for glory. Heb. x.

This is that peculiar excellence in the Lamb of God, on account of which we are invited to behold him. Behold him, sinner! for he *taketh away sin*. The words *taketh away* signifies he *beareth away*. This denotes that sin is a *heavy burden*. And would to God this were seriously considered. "Fools make a mock at sin;" they make light of it; they make a jest of it; but thereby they shew *their folly*. Let them think a moment (if minds so light *can think*) let them think—what it was that filled the world—

with "mourning, lamentation, and woe!" what produced all the sorrows and sufferings that we see, or feel, or fear? Was it not sin, accursed sin? Let them consider what a burden it is to a guilty conscience, when once its evil is discovered and its effects dreaded; for though the spirit of a man may "sustain his infirmity, a wounded spirit who can bear?" The Psalmist, a type of this sin-bearing lamb, cries out—"There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my sin; for mine iniquities are gone over mine head as an heavy burden; they are too heavy for me." Ps. xxxviii. 3, 4. Life itself is a burden to a mind oppressed with the guilt of some particular sin, or of sin in general. This led Judas to suicide, and has led many others to the same fatal end. But this is the way to increase the burden, not to lose it: for damned souls in hell must for ever lie under the intolerable weight. There *the worm dieth not*, even the worm of a corroding conscience, always stung by remorse; *and the furious fire* of divine resentment is never *quenched*.

But, blessings for ever to the dear Lamb of God! He bore our sins, and bore them away. In the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, where the sufferings of Christ are wonderfully described, it is said, Verse 6, "The Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all;" and St. Peter says, 1 Pet. ii. 24. "He himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree." As our surety he made himself answerable for our sins, so that they were imputed to him; he bore the punishment due to them, even the wrath and curse of God, which, if he had not borne, must have sunk each of us into the pit of hell. And O what did Christ endure when this heavy burden was laid upon him! Hear his groans in the garden, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, or very heavy, even unto death: Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me"—let the season of my sufferings be shortened. See the bloody sweat that fell from him in the agony. This was the effect of the burden of our sins, which then were made "to meet upon him." There was a very remarkable type of this under the law, Levit. xvi. On the great day of atonement two goats were provided. One of them was killed for a sin offering. On the other goat "Aaron shall

The eye is never satisfied without seeing them ; it all craves something new. But here is the grandest of that ever eyes beheld. Do men eagerly desire to see extraordinary persons ? here is the most glorious person ever was seen. The queen of Sheba came a great way to see Solomon ; “ but a greater than Solomon is here. When a king or an emperor appears in public, crowd anxious to behold him. Here is the King of kings. King of the World. At the assizes, every one wishes to see the judge. Here is the great *Judge* of quick and dead, from whose sacred lips each of us shall receive our sentence. Generals and admirals, who have had great success in war, are commonly objects of peculiar regard. Here is the Conqueror of the world, of sin, of hell, who led captivity captive, and bought our freedom with his blood. Here is an Orator, whose words not only move the living but raise the dead. Here is a Physician, who has cured millions of dying souls, and never failed in a single case. In a word, Behold your SAVIOUR !

It is the look of *faith* that is chiefly intended. *Faith* in Christ is described by various names, according to the various names of Christ. When Christ is represented as the *foundation*, then faith is *resting* upon him. If he be represented as *food*, then faith is *eating* and *drinking*. If he is called a *gift*, then faith is *receiving* him. If he is represented as a *refuge*, faith is *flying* to him. When he is represented as *calling* sinners, then faith is *hearing* him and *coming* to him : and here where Christ is represented as a *glorious object*, faith is *beholding* him.

It is represented in the same manner by our Lord himself, John iii. 14. “ As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up : that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” When the Jews were dying by the bite of serpents, they were cured merely by looking at a brazen serpent ; so, whoever is ready to perish in his sin, let him look to Jesus, and he shall be saved.

Looking is an act of the mind : it supposes some knowledge of Christ, which is elsewhere called *seeing the truth* and joined with *believing on him*. It supposes a conviction of the need of Christ ; looking to Jesus is the act of

who wants to be saved. It supposes that the soul *despairs* of finding help from any other quarter; it is looking from every thing else in order to believe in him. It supposes a persuasion of his ability to save, to save to the uttermost; and it includes some humble degree of hope, that looking to him will not be in vain.

Those who thus behold Christ by faith will also behold him with affection. With what eyes, think you, did they look at Christ, who had been healed and helped by him? The sick, the blind, the lame, the dead, who had felt his miraculous power in their recovery? With eyes, melting in tears of gratitude, would they gaze on their kind benefactor, their great deliverer. O with what joy and love, should saved sinners behold the dear Redeemer! Yea, it will be the heaven of heaven thus to behold him for ever.

APPLICATION.—And now, having considered what a great and glorious object Jesus Christ is, and what regard we ought to pay him, let us ask the question, Have we complied with this easy, pleasant, reasonable command in the text? Have we in the *attention*, with *faith*, with *affection*, beheld this dear Lamb of God? Ah, Sirs, are not some of your hearts fixed on very different objects;—your worldly gain, the gaieties of the world, the base lusts of the flesh? Are not these your favourite objects; O consider this, you that forget God. What can all these do for you? Even now they satisfy not. But what will they do for you in a dying hour? O be persuaded to look to Jesus. How else will you look death in the face? how else will you dare to look the neglected Saviour in the face, when you see him on his throne of judgment? What will all the world think of you, when you shall be pointed out before them, and it shall be proclaimed—“Here is a man that never thought it worth his while to look at Jesus?” Will not all heaven say, “Let him be damned? If he even was not worth a look, let him be banished from it for ever?” O sinner, if you would have Jesus look upon you *then*, look upon him *now*; and if you know not how to do it, pray him to teach you, and ask of him “eye-salve that thou mayest see.”

Are any here, who wish that their sins may be taken away? Their sins are many, and lie heavy on their con-

sciences, and they can find no relief. "Behold thou of God;" he *only* taketh away sin. Perhaps you have been looking elsewhere. You have been looking at yourself, your own goodness, your honesty, your churchings, prayers, and sacraments. Are these Saviour? Were these appointed of God to take away sin? They are good things in their places, but very bad things to be in the place of Christ. Away with them all in point of dependence, and for the purpose of acceptance. When Paul you must count them all loss and dung, that you may win Christ and be found in him. Look to nothing but Jesus; for only he taketh away the sin of the world.

And to you, believer, also, we still say, "Behold the Lamb of God." This must be your daily business as you live. And nothing can be so useful. Have you a hard heart? look to him, and it will melt. "They looked upon me whom they pierced, and mourn." "They were cast down and full of fears?"—"they looked to him, and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed." With Jonah in the whale's belly, "I will look at him." Would you obtain genuine humility? A sight of him must effect it. Job and Isaiah got it by a view of the glory of Christ. Would you entertain a constant hope? Behold the Lamb of God, bleeding for it on the cross. Would you be truly holy? Behold the glory of the face of Jesus, and you shall be transformed into the same image from glory to glory. Would you be true to God, and constant in his cause? Behold the patience of God, who has left us an example that we should follow in his steps. Thus, Christians, persist in looking to him daily by faith, till death shall shift the scene, and change faith into sight. Then shall you see him as he is, no longer "through a glass darkly, but face to face." Then shall you evermore need the exhortation in the "Behold the Lamb of God."

SERMON XXIX.

THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

Acts ix. 11. Behold, he prayeth !

THE grace of God was never more gloriously displayed, than in the Conversion of St. Paul. Speaking of it himself, he says, "The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant;" and "In me, Jesus Christ shewed forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." The change that was wrought in him was so sudden and remarkable, that the disciples of Christ at Damascus were afraid it was not real. To remove their suspicions, our Lord assures Ananias, their minister, that he was certainly a changed man; *for, Behold, he prayeth!* As if he had said, "You need not be afraid of him now. He was a bad man, but now he is a new man. He breathed out threatenings and slaughter, but now he breatheth out prayers and supplications. *Behold, he prayeth!*"

As Paul's praying is here mentioned by Jesus Christ as a proof of his Conversion, we shall take occasion from these words to shew, that

A praying person is a gracious person.

This important truth will appear with the stronger evidence by considering the history of Paul's conversion, as recorded in this chapter.

Paul was the son of Jewish parents; but being born in the city of Tarsus, was entitled to the privileges of a Roman citizen. He was brought up to the business of a tent-maker: for it was the laudable custom of the Jews, however rich, to teach their children some trade. He had, however, a good education, and was sent to Jerusalem, where he studied the Jewish religion under the care of Gamaliel, a learned doctor of the law. He also joined the sect of the Pharisees, who were in great esteem at that time for their apparent piety and zeal. But he unhappily imbibed their self-righteous notions, their bigotry, and their bitter hatred of Jesus Christ and his followers. Paul,

probably, had opportunity to hear the discourses and the miracles of Jesus, but they made no saving impressions on his mind; on the contrary, he became the inveterate enemy of his followers. With all his professed religion, he was a proud man, depending on his own merits for salvation, and therefore not at all disposed to relinquish the humbling, self-denying religion of Christ, to join himself with the despised Nazarenes. Yea, it was these were his prejudices, that he became "a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious."

The first we read of him in the book of the Acts, is that he assisted at the cruel murder of Stephen, the first Christian martyr; for he took care of the clothes of the man who stoned him, and thereby shewed his approbation of the bloody deed. After this, he was very active in persecution. He made "havock of the church, entering into every house, and dragging away men and women as they were found, committed them to jail," that they might be put to death. He "imprisoned, beat, and punished," all the believers he could find in any of the synagogues; and, being exceedingly mad" against the Christians, he ordered many of them to take refuge from his fury, by flying to distant places. Not content with this, he applied to the High Priest for authority to extend his persecution to the city of Damascus, which was 160 miles off. On this cruel expedition he set out, "breathing threatening slaughter against the disciples of the Lord."

Who would have ever thought that this man should become a Christian, a preacher, an apostle, a martyr? There is nothing in him that could entitle him to the favour of God? Some have supposed so, in order to lessen the value of the free, sovereign grace of God in his conversion. Thus he was sincere in his way, had "virtuous habits," and therefore had a previous disposition to receive the Gospel. Nothing can be more false. He tells us himself that he was "the chief of sinners;" he was "in the flesh," "he was about to establish his own righteousness, not to submit himself to the righteousness of God." Surely here was nothing to recommend him to mercy; but every thing might provoke the Almighty to destroy him for his sins. *But "God's ways are not as man's ways, nor his thoughts as man's thoughts."*

as man's thoughts." Paul "was a vessel of mercy;" "separated from his mother's womb;" in the counsels of God; but the call was deferred till a time, when the freeness, power, and riches of grace might appear with the brightest lustre.

Paul was now within sight of Damascus, enjoying the thoughts of his expected success; when, suddenly, in a moment, there appeared a light in the firmament, a dazzling brightness, far above that of the sun, which was then shining in its meridian splendour. It was not a flash of lightning, but a continued glory, composed of rays which darted from the body of our Saviour, who condescended personally to appear for the calling of this atrocious sinner. At the sight of this prodigious splendour, Paul, and all his companions, "fell to the earth," dazzled and confounded. While prostrate on the ground, a voice full of awful majesty pronounced these words—*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* It was Jesus who spake; but Paul knew him not; yet supposing it must be some divine personage, he summoned up sufficient courage to say, "Who art thou, Lord?" And he immediately replied, with a solemnity and endearment peculiar to himself, and which pierced the rebel's heart—"I am Jesus, the Nazarene, whom thou persecutest: It is hard for thee to kick against the goads."

Observe here that Jesus Christ accounts *himself* persecuted, when his poor members are persecuted. Paul thought he was punishing only a despicable set of silly enthusiasts, who had forsaken the Church, and espoused the cause of the crucified Jesus; but Christ takes up the cause, and lets him know, that he thought *himself* injured by the injuries done to his followers. Let this be a check to those thoughtless persons, who disturb and oppose religious people in their devotions. You may be as much mistaken as Paul was; for aught you know, the people you despise may be dear to God. If their religion be wrong, it is none of your business to punish them for it. Leave that to God. *You* are not their judge. But if their religion be right, what then are you doing? You are *fighting against God*, and in so doing you are hurting yourself. For so our Lord adds, respecting Saul; "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks or goads;" alluding to oxen urged on to

either that he was an *impostor*, and meant to deceive; or that he was a *weak man*, and so was deceived by others.

Now, there is no reason to think that Paul was an *Impostor*, and meant to deceive mankind. Impostors always seek themselves, they deceive to get *money*, or *power* or *fame*, or *pleasure*. But Paul sought none of these: *no money*; he forsook the rich party of the Jews, to join the poor party of the Christians; for the first Christians were so poor in general, that they were supported by the contributions of the few rich that were among them. Paul himself frequently worked with his own hands. Nobody ever suspected Paul of being rich.

He sought not *power*. Who could give it him? All the powers of the earth, whether Jewish or Heathen were against the Christians, and were employed to crush them. Great numbers were persecuted and put to death and St. Paul himself at last.

He sought not *fame*: he became *infamous* in the esteem of the world; *being defamed*, saith he, "we entreat; we are accounted the filth and off-scouring of all things. The name of a *Nazarene*, and afterwards that of a *Christian*, was contemptible and odious to the last degree.

Nor was it sensual *pleasure* he sought. No. He took up the cross when he took up Christianity. He knew nothing of carnal ease, or the delight of sense. His life was all activity and suffering. "He was stoned, he was beaten with rods; twice he suffered shipwreck; he was in journeyings often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in cold and nakedness. All these things prove that Paul was no impostor; he certainly believed what he taught, and he had no bad design in teaching what he believed.

It is equally certain that Paul was not deceived by others. Who should deceive him? Not his former companion. They would have murdered him for the change. Not the poor timid Christians: They were afraid to receive him when changed. Who could form such a light in the heavens? Who could form such a sound in the air? Who could strike him and his numerous companions to the ground? Who could make Paul blind for three days?

And when blind, who could restore him to sight? Indeed, there is nothing in Paul's character that can lead us to suspect that he was deceived. He was not a weak man, nor an enthusiast. And his whole conduct for twenty years after his conversion, the temper he discovered, the doctrines he delivered, the apologies that he made, and the letters that he wrote; as fully prove that he was not a weak enthusiast, and so deceived, as they do that he was no deceiver. And if Paul was neither deceived in what he believed, nor a deceiver in what he professed, it must follow undeniably, that the Christian system is not a delusion, but that it is the truth of God, the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation. And let this be an answer to those, who may try to cheat you of your faith and of your salvation, by pretending contradictions and blunders in the holy Scriptures: they may tell you that this and that book was not written by the author whose name it bears, and that there is such and such a mistake in names and date. Instead of regarding their little quibbles and cavilling objections, ask them to account for the conversion of St. Paul upon any other principle than that of the truth of the Christian religion, and they will be confounded.

But to return to the design first proposed. We intended to shew, that *a praying person is a gracious person*, for Jesus Christ, in order to prove that Saul was converted, said, *Behold, he prayeth*.

This observation made respecting him is very remarkable, if you consider that he had been a *Pharisee*. Now the Pharisees were so called because they separated themselves from others, professing to be more strict in all religious duties and ceremonies than their neighbours.—“They fasted twice a week,” and “they made *long prayers*,” they prayed “standing in the synagogues,” and even “in the corners of the streets;” they prayed over and over again, “thinking to be heard for their much speaking.” Is it not strange, then, that our Lord should say of Paul, *Behold, he prayeth!* Was it a new thing for a pharisee to pray?

There was certainly now something very different in his *prayers* from what he had been used to. All his former

prayers are here reckoned for nothing; for now he prayeth; that is, he now begins to pray. It may be observed that the Pharisees were fond of making *public* their prayers; we no where read of their praying in *private*; and it is likely that they seldom did: for our Lord directs his disciples not to make their prayers in the streets, but to enter into their *closets* and pray. Probably, therefore, this was the first time in all his life that he ever prayed in secret. And there are now many people, who would not be thought to neglect their prayers at church, who make no conscience of praying at home. But we cannot well suppose that person to be a real Christian, who does not pray alone.

The prayer that Paul now offered was *sincere*. He had prayed often with his lips, now his *heart* prays. There is a great deal of sin committed by some people in their prayers. Like the hypocrites of old, "they draw nigh to God with their mouths, and honour him with their lips, but their *heart* is far from him." Christ charged the Pharisees with doing so, Matt. xv. 7, 8. Paul was one of this sort before his conversion; but now he drew near to God with his heart. Nothing deserves the name of prayer unless it comes from the heart. It is not *words* that make prayer, it is *desires*; the felt desires of the heart made sensible of its state and its wants. There are more lies told in our churches and meetings, than at our markets. What sad hypocrisy is it for a set of gay, proud, wanton people, to cry—"Lord have mercy upon us! Christ have mercy upon us! Incline our hearts to keep these laws, &c. &c." while they neither feel the want of mercy, nor wish to obey the will of God.

Paul now began to pray in another respect. He prayed as an *humble sinner*, not as a *proud Pharisee*. When our Lord designed to expose the self-righteous pride of the Pharisees, he represented, in a parable, these two sorts of men going to the temple to pray. And what did they differ in? The one boasted of his goodness; the other, humbled, and almost broken-hearted, under a sense of his guilt, cries out, "God be merciful to me a *sinner*!" No man prays in God's account, till he prays as a sinner, for pardoning mercy. It was during these three days' blindness of his body, that the eyes of his understanding

were opened. It was then that he first began to know that the law was *spiritual*. "He was without the law before; but now the commandment came, sin revived, and he died." Jesus saw him in his mournful state and hastens to his relief. Go to him, Ananias, and heal this broken-hearted penitent, for under a sense of his sin, behold, he prayeth.

Paul, we may suppose, was now acquainted with the Gospel scheme. It was probably revealed to him during these three days. And now, he not only owns Jesus as the true Messiah, but knows the gracious purpose for which he came, "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." This is a truth which Paul cordially received. Being well versed in the law about sacrifices, he clearly saw in them all, that Jesus Christ is the true "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." He saw the reason of that humiliation of Jesus and his death on the cross, that was before a stumbling-block to him; and now he determines "to know nothing but Christ crucified, and to glory in nothing but the cross." Before this, his dependence was upon his Jewish privileges—his birth, his circumcision, his zeal, his morality; but now all these things, which were *gain*, are accounted *loss*, yea, dung and dross, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and an interest in him. How differently would such a man pray from what he did before? He now comes to Jesus, and to the Father, through him, for eternal life.

APPLICATION.—We have now taken a view of converting grace, by the example of the Apostle Paul. And let it be observed, that conversion is the same for substance, at all times and in all persons. Circumstances may differ, but the work is the same. In all cases it is the wonderful work of God; always undeserved; and always produces like effects. We are not indeed to expect a vision or a voice from heaven as in this instance, but it is generally wrought by means of the word of Christ, set home on the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. See here the mighty hand of God! Is any thing too hard for the Lord? Here is grace indeed! free grace, sovereign grace, rich grace, abundant grace; and all this "for a pattern to them who should *hereafter* believe." Let none despair, when such a sinner

as Saul is saved. The same grace, sinner, that changed his heart, can change thine; the same grace, that pardoned his sins, can pardon thine; and it will do so too, if, like him, thy proud heart is brought down, and thou art enabled to say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" This was his first petition; the dawn of eternal day in his soul. O that each of us might but say this from his heart! Can you follow me in these words?—"Lord, I give myself up to thee. I have done wickedly, but would do so no more. O, what wouldst thou have me to do? Let me be led into a right way, ~~for~~ knowing and doing thy will; that I may testify my repentance, honour thy name, and obtain the forgiveness of my sins." When Paul prayed thus, the merciful Saviour directed him to go into the city; and afterwards sent his servant to instruct and comfort him. So will he say to thee, Arise, wait upon God. Read and hear his word; and he shall visit thy soul with the light, power, and comfort of his great salvation.

As this text affords great encouragement to praying souls, and furnishes them with a plain and pleasing evidence of their conversion; so it marks out, as distinctly, the woeful state of a prayerless person. Dost thou live without prayer, man, woman, child?—Thou art no Christian. Thou art an Atheist; yea, much worse than an Atheist. He believes no God, and therefore cannot pray to him. You say you believe in God, but never seek him. If you can live without prayer, it is a proof of a blind mind, and of a hard heart; it shews ingratitude to God, and insensibility of want. It proves thou art a stranger to faith, to repentance, to hope, to love, to every christian grace; for as all these are exercised in true prayer; so, the prayerless person proves he is destitute of them all. What is he then? An enemy to God, and a destroyer of his own soul. "As the Lord liveth, there is but one step between thee and death." "Arise, O sleeper, and call upon thy God." "Turn or burn. Pray or perish."

Go on, praying, Christian. "The Lord never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain." He who said, *Behold, he prayeth*, and observed his first breathings for mercy. He was heard. He was pardoned. He was saved. He is praising now. Behold, he prayeth! He

has been praising Christ for 1700 years, and will do so to all eternity. Who would not pray now, seeing prayer shall be turned into praise, and issue in everlasting songs of joy and triumph?

SERMON XXX.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

John iii. 16. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

IN these words you have the sum of the whole Gospel. Good news for sinners; glad tidings of great joy to all people. They are the words of Jesus Christ, in his admirable discourse with Nicodemus, a teacher and a ruler of the Jews. This man being convinced by the miracles of Christ, that he was "a teacher come from God," wished to have some conversation with him; but not having yet courage enough to declare for him openly, came to him, privately by night. Our Lord directly began with him on the subject of the *new-birth*. "Nicodemus," said he, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God:" for, observe, the knowledge of the corruption of our nature, and of the necessity of being inwardly changed by grace, is the very first thing we must learn in religion. Nicodemus, with all his learning, was as yet ignorant of this; and so are many of our teachers. But Christ insists upon it, that a man must be born again; and from the doctrine of the new-birth, he passes on to that of faith in Christ, and salvation through faith. This he explains by a remarkable type or emblem of it, well known to the Jews, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." Here Christ foretels his death upon the cross, and the benefit believers would derive from it. As the wounded Jew was healed by looking at the brazen serpent; so the perishing sinner is saved by looking at Christ crucified. And, that the sinner may not fear rejection, it is declared: In our text, that the salvation of all who believe, was the

very thing that God designed in giving his Son. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." It is in the free and eternal love of God that our salvation begins. "The first of God's gifts is his love; the first gift of his love is his Son; the first gift of his Son is faith; and faith is the root of all other graces, the principle of the new life, and the key which shuts up hell, and opens the gate of heaven.

It is *the love of God* we are now to meditate upon. But O, who is equal to the subject? "Can we by searching find out God; the love of God; God, who is love? Can we find out the love of God to perfection? It is as high as heaven; what can we do? Deeper than hell; what can we know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. O that the love of God may now be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit;" that we may "be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." In order to this, let us consider the following things:

I. The LOVE of God—*God so loved the world.*

II. The EVIDENCE of it—that *he gave his Son.*

And, III. The END or DESIGN of it, *that whosoever believeth might be saved.*

First, let us consider *the love of God*. Consider *who* it is that loves, and who are the persons beloved. HE, who loves, is the great God, who was from everlasting, infinitely happy in himself, and who needed not the aid of any creatures. HE who made all things out of nothing by the word of his power. HE, "with whom the nations are as a drop of the bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance? they are before him as nothing, yea, less than nothing, and vanity." "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him!" But what is more wonderful is, that God, who is infinitely *holy*, and "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," should ever love creatures like us, who are full of sin. He loved *the world*; this world; not angels, but men; sinful men of all ages and countries. Not sinners of the Jews only, as some of them fondly dreamed. "*Christ*," saith the apostle John, "is the propitiation for

our sins ; and not for our's only," who are Jews, "but for the sins of the whole world"—for all who shall hereafter believe on him, whether Jews or Gentiles, wheresoever they may be scattered throughout the whole world.

Nothing is so wonderful as the love of God to sinful man. When man was made at first, he was lower than the angels ; how much lower is the *sinner* than the *man* ! In some respect he is lower than the brutes ; for "he has the worst qualities of the brutes without their best." Yet, "God hath remembered us in our low estate, for his mercy endureth for ever." The love of creatures to one another, is generally founded on some real or supposed goodness or excellency ; but there was nothing at all in man to excite the love of God, but on the contrary his hatred and wrath. "The whole world lieth in wickedness," or *in the wicked one*, the devil ; under his rule and influence ; full of ignorance, carnality, and enmity against God ; in a state of actual rebellion against him, and without the least desire to know him, serve him, or enjoy him. Yet hear, O heavens, and be astonished O earth ! God loved this world of sinners. But how much, no tongue can tell ; no heart conceive ; the love is so matchless, so unlike any thing in human affairs, that our text makes no comparison in order to describe it ; it has no parallel or similitude among men ; and therefore, it is only said, "God so loved the world, that he gave us his Son." In most cases human love is expressed better by words than deeds ; but the love of God is such, that it cannot be expressed at all by words ; words are too weak ; it is by actions, that God commends his love towards us ; and above all by this one—the gift of his Son : and this is the *second* thing proposed—

II. THE EVIDENCE of God's love ; "he gave us his only begotten Son." Many are the precious gifts of God to this world of sinners. The powers of our minds and bodies, the food we eat, the garments we wear, the health we enjoy ; ten thousand thousand precious gifts call loudly upon us for daily praises. But great as these are, they are all lost in this one, like a drop of water in the sea. St. John speaking of it says, "*Herein* is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son ;" as if he said, this is love indeed ; compared with this, nothing

else deserves the name ; and without it, what would all other gifts have proved ? what do they prove to wicked men, who live and die "without Christ?" This is that gift of God, promised to our first parents in the garden ; and which Abraham, David, Isaiah, all the patriarchs, and all the prophets, looked and longed for. This was "*The Mercy* promised to the fathers," (Luke i. 72.)—This is the mercy that never could have been expected, never desired. It would never have entered into the heart of men or angels to have thought of such a thing, as that God should give us his Son. And certainly it never could have been *deserved*. Man deserves nothing but hell. The common blessings of life are all forfeited by sin ; and therefore we properly call our food, raiment, and health, *mercies*, for so they are ; but when we consider the greatness of that gift, they disappear like the brightest stars when the sun rises. It will be a matter of astonishment to all eternity that God should so love the world as to give us his Son.

The greatness of this love appears in the greatness of the gift ; in the glory and excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is here called *his only begotten Son*. The angels are sons of God by *creation* ; and believers are sons of God by *adoption* ; but Jesus Christ is the only *begotten* Son of God. This is a name that we cannot fully explain ; but it certainly signifies, that Jesus partakes of the same divine nature with his Father. "That holy thing that was born of the Virgin, was called the Son of God." Because we, when he came to save, "were partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise partook of the same nature." He was truly man, "flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone." But he was also as truly God. God and man in one person. "In whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." "He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." "The Word who was made flesh and dwelt among us, was with God, and was God." And, indeed, this is the great mystery of godliness, that God was manifested in the flesh." "Emmanuel—God with us." "The Lord our righteousness." And although the Son of God veiled his glory when on earth, and "made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant," yet his true followers "beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Fa-

ther, full of grace and truth." "His birth, though humble, was celebrated by a multitude of the heavenly host; he had a poor lodging, but a star lighted visitants to it from a far country. He had not such attendants as other kings have, but he was attended with far better—crowds of patients getting health of body and soul. He made the dumb to sing his praises, and the lame to leap for joy; the deaf to hear his wonders, and the blind to see his glory. And though he submitted to the shameful death of the cross, heaven and earth became mourners on the occasion; the sun was clad in black, and if men were unmoved, the earth trembled; there were few to rend their garments, but the rocks were not so insensible; they rent their bowels. Death and the grave submitted to his power; the king of terrors lost his sting, and the Prince of life triumphed over him." This is the great and glorious person whom the Father freely gave from his bosom, "God's own Son;" "God's dear Son;" "God's well-beloved Son;" and surely this was the greatest possible proof of his love. When God tried Abraham, he said to him—"Take now thy *son*, thine *only* son, Isaac, whom thou *lovest*, and offer him up for a *burnt-offering*." Was ever command so difficult, so trying? Every word is like a dagger to a parent's heart; but he obeys. He consults not with flesh and blood. He takes his son to the mountain; the altar is built; the wood laid in order; the youth is bound; the fatal knife uplifted; but it is enough. The design is answered. Abraham's faith is proved, "even the faith that works by *love*." "Now I know," saith the Lord, "that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy *son*, thine *only* son from me." And may we not say, Now we know and are sure; we cannot admit a doubt of it; that God loves sinful man; seeing he withheld not his Son, his only begotten Son from us; "he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." Verily, *God is love!*

Abraham's was a rare instance. What he did was at God's command; and it was done in faith, that God would raise him again from the dead, rather than the promise should fail. But what would induce a fond parent to part with a child, even for the sake of a friend, much less of an *enemy*? History tells, that during a dreadful famine in

Germany, a poor family, consisting of a man, his wife, and four children, were reduced to the last extremity, and on the very point of being starved to death. Knowing no other method of relief, the husband proposed that one of the children should be sold, that so they might procure bread for themselves and the rest. To this painful proposal the wife at last reluctantly consents. It was now necessary to consider which of the four should be sold. The eldest was first mentioned; but neither of the parents could think of that; the dear child was their first-born; they could not possibly part with him. The second child was then produced; but the poor mother objected. The fine boy was the very picture of his father; she could not spare him. The third, a charming girl, came next in turn; but the father made a similar objection; the dear child bore so strong a resemblance of her mother; she must not go.—Well, only one remained. The youngest appears. But here both at once unite to say we cannot part with him, this is our Benjamin, the darling child of our old age.—No, we will rather perish all together, than part with any one of our dear children. Let this little story illustrate, in some feeble degree, the wonderful love of God. God *so* loved the world, that he gave his *only* begotten Son, his dearly beloved Son, to be our Saviour.

The greatness of this gift will still further appear, if we consider *to what*, and *for what*, he was given. If he had taken our nature in its highest and best form; if he had become a prince or an Emperor; it had been much. But how much more was it for him to come into our world in the lowest circumstances; to be born in a stable; to be laid in a manger; to be persecuted almost as soon as born; to be a poor man, so poor that he had not a place where to lay his head: to be a despised man, “a worm, and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people;” to be a “man of sorrows; and especially to bear the contradictions of sinners against himself.”

It is a great hardship for a good man to be forced to be for a few hours in bad company. A man who fears God can hardly endure to travel or sit a few hours with profane, lewd, or drunken people. But Christ spent above thirty years in this wicked world. Good men “sigh and cry for

abominations they behold ;” “ rivers of tears run down eyes because men keep not God’s laws.” How then the holy heart of Jesus Christ have been grieved the wicked actions and words of men, and with their *evil thoughts*, all which were present to his mind continually.

But God’s giving his Son includes still more. It includes giving them up into the hands of divine justice, and the hands of wicked men, as the executioners thereof. That spared not his own Son, delivered him up for all.” So St. Peter spake of him. “ Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” The text shews to what purpose he was thus given up. It was that believers *might not perish*. They were to perish. They had broken the law ; they had incurred the curse ; and must have perished, if no satisfaction had been made to the Justice of God. But, Behold *Lamb of God* ; provided, appointed, given of God. God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for our condemned sin in the flesh.” “ He was made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” O Christians, see the Son of God in his agony in the garden, sweating great drops of blood. See him standing as a criminal at Pilate’s bar, falsely accused, and basely treated. See him hanging on the accursed tree ; his hands and feet nailed to the cross ; rejected by the cruel insulting mob, and deserted by his only Father. And say now—God so loved the world, *how much*, thou canst not say. The depth of Christ’s love, and the height of glory to which they raise thee, express this love in stronger terms than language knows. There is yet another way, in which God gives his Son, in the preaching of the Gospel, and in the application of it to the believer’s heart. As the brazen serpent was set up to view in the camp of Israel, so is Christ set before perishing sinners in the Gospel. Herein God “ sets forth his Son,” and “ declares his righteousness,” “ brings forth his righteousness”—“ reveals his righteousness,” that may be received by faith, and become ours by believing. *My Father*,” saith Christ, “ giveth you the true bread

from heaven: for the bread of God is He which comes down from heaven, and giveth life to the world," John 22. It is set before all men who hear the Gospel; but it is the food only of those, who only by faith receive it; and this leads us to the last thing proposed, which is,

III. The END or DESIGN of this gift of love—"that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

The salvation of believing sinners was the object which God had in view when he gave his Son. Supposing God would send his Son into the world, for what purpose might sinners have expected him; might they not justly fear it would be to punish them for their sins? So it seems intimated in the next verse, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." The whole conduct of our Saviour upon earth agreed with this gracious design. He came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. Every thing he did and every thing he said, had this tendency.

This gracious design is expressed two ways; the first "That they might not perish." To *perish* is for a man to die in his sins, under the curse of the law, under the wrath of God, and to be for ever miserable in hell. This is the proper wages of sin, the real desert of every sinner: and we must know this to be our desert, before we can look to Jesus for salvation. Our Lord, in this passage, alludes to the brazen serpent in the wilderness. Now, for whom was this erected? Was it an object of curiosity, to be gazed at by a vain multitude? No; it was for the cure of the wounded Jews, who had been stung by the fiery serpents; who had been poisoned by their venom, and who were ready to expire in agony. These men, being ready to perish, would gladly comply with the Divine command. How easy, how cheap, how pleasant a method of relief *Look and live*, was the heavenly mandate. Just so it is the Gospel of Christ, "Look unto me," saith Christ, "and ye shall be saved." If we receive the Gospel as the testimony of God, we shall turn our eyes to no other method of relief but this. We shall renounce all notions of merit and works, we shall receive Jesus, and rest upon him alone for salvation.

But this is not all. Salvation includes the possession of eternal life, as well as deliverance from death. "I am come, that they might have life, and might have it more abundantly," said Christ. This includes the life of grace, and the life of glory. Believers now live; they live to God; they live spiritually; they live by faith in the Son of God. Before conversion they were "dead while they lived." Now they live indeed. Christ by his Spirit lived in them, and they live in him. Christ is now their life; and when he shall appear the second time, they shall also appear with him in glory. Grace is glory in the bud. He that believeth hath everlasting life, Ver. 36: he has not only a title to it, but he has the *beginning, security, pledge, earnest, and foretaste* of it, which shall certainly issue in the full, complete, and everlasting enjoyment of it in heaven.

But there is a word of encouragement in our text which we must by no means forget, *WHOSOEVER*: God gave his Son, "whosoever believeth in him might not perish," &c. Persons of every character; high and low, rich and poor, young and old; sinners of every degree, the greatest, vilest, and most abominable. Not only may the more *moral man*, who is also a sinner, look to Jesus and be saved; but that unhappy creature a man or woman, who has gone to uncommon lengths in sin, who thinks there is not such another sinner out of hell, and who is even tempted to despair of mercy, perhaps tempted to self-murder on account of his peculiar and terrible guilt—*Whosoever*—observe the word, *whosoever believeth*; here is a warrant for the vilest sinner upon earth to look to Jesus, to come to Jesus, to believe in Jesus; and the truth of God is pledged for it, that he shall not be cast out. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," John vi. 37.

APPLICATION.—We have heard *great things* to-day, "The angels desire to look into these things." All the millions of the redeemed in glory are now looking into these things. And if we get to heaven, the love of God, the gift of his love, and the effect of this gift, will employ our ravished souls to all eternity. But say, my friends, how do they affect you? Or, are you totally unaffected by them? Does not this vain and wicked world engross

your hearts while the love of God, and the gifts of Christ are quite forgotten?

But stop a moment, and consider. What are you doing? You are committing the greatest sin in the world. Unbelief is a damning sin; "he that believeth not is condemned already; and this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil," so our Lord declares in this chapter. As the gift of Christ is the greatest price that God could give of his love to the world, so, depending upon it, he will resent the contempt of it as the greatest crime. It is a crime greater than the devils in hell ever committed. They never had a Saviour to despise and reject. O beware of the fatal consequences! Death is approaching, and you must appear before Christ. But he will you face him, when you know you neglect him all your days? O, what would sinners give in the great day for interest in Christ! Worlds! worlds! millions of worlds would be counted cheap, could they purchase an interest in him. Well, sinner, as yet there is hope. Though you have neglected long, it is not too late yet. Turn now, thy weeping eyes to the cross of Jesus. Behold God's dear Son, and the sinner's dear Saviour, with extended arms open to embrace thee. Hear him crying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." O, let your heart reply, "Behold I come unto thee, for thou art the Lord my God."

And, O believer, humble believer in Jesus, what thinkest thou of Christ? Is he not precious to thee, the price of great price, the chief of ten thousand, and altogether lovely? What praise and love are due from thee to the Father, who gave his Son: to the Son, who gave himself; and to the Holy Spirit, who led thee to know and believe in him! Thou canst heartily say with St. Paul, *Thanks be to God for his UNSPEAKABLE GIFT!* The wonderful love of God in the gift of his Son convinces us in the most striking manner, of the immense value of the soul, and of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, seeing that a sinful soul could not be redeemed but at such a vast expense. What an encouragement is here to him, who sees his sin infinite, that the blood of Christ, the blood

God, is of *infinite value* and efficacy ! And what encouragement is here for the believer, who has received this greatest of gifts, that God will not withhold lesser gifts ; for “ he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him, freely give us all things.” Yes, “ all is ours,” if Christ is ours. “ He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”

Blessed be God, for Jesus Christ. Amen.

SERMON XXXI.

ON THE SABBATH, OR LORD'S DAY.

Exodus xx. 8. Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy.

THIS is the commandment of the Great God. It is one of “ *the ten words*,” spoken with divine majesty on Mount Sinai, and also written by the finger of God in tables of stone. There is no commandment of the ten of greater consequence than this ; yet scarcely any one is so much disregarded. Well, therefore, may it begin with the word—*Remember* ; seeing that thoughtless mortals are so prone to forget it.

We are by no means to suppose that this law was given to the *Jews* only. It is not of a *ceremonial* nature, but *moral* ; as all the ten are. The Sabbath was not first instituted when the law was given to Moses : it was only renewed. We read of the Sabbath in the second chapter of Genesis. It began as soon as the world began ; “ for on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made ; and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.” There can be no doubt that Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and all the good men of old, observed the Sabbath ; but when the descendants of Abraham became slaves in Egypt, it is probable that they could not observe it as they ought : but now being delivered from bondage, the law was revived, and they are commanded to *remember* the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

This law, then, is of perpetual obligation. And if God saw it needful for Adam to keep it even in Paradise, and before he sinned, how much more necessary is it for us to keep it. He had no hard work to do, from which he required rest; his heart was full of the love of God, and every day was like a Sabbath: but as for us, the labours of our bodies, and the cares of our minds are such, as to make a weekly rest absolutely necessary. Besides, we are so full of sin, so surrounded by temptation, and so apt to forget God and our souls that we greatly need a weekly Sabbath to call away our affections from the world, and direct them to things above.

It is true that we do not keep the self-same day as the Jews did. They kept the *seventh* day of the week, but we, the *first*. But the morality of the Sabbath does not consist in its being the *seventh day* of the week, but in its being the *seventh part* of our time. Besides, we have the same authority for keeping the *first* day, as they had for keeping the *seventh*; for Jesus Christ is "Lord of the Sabbath;" and his apostles, who acted by his directions, and under the influence of his Spirit, constantly met for divine worship on the first day of the week, which was called "The Lord's Day," Acts xx. 7. Rev. i. 10. This was kept because it was the day of his resurrection; and as the Sabbath was first of all kept because the work of the creation was finished; and renewed when God had finished the great work of redeeming his people from bondage; so the Christian Sabbath is kept on the day when the Lord arose from the dead, having finished the great work of redeeming souls from sin, and death, and hell. There is also great reason to think that the creation Sabbath was changed when the Jews came out of Egypt, so that they kept their first Sabbath in the wilderness on the sixth day of the week, accounting it the seventh from their coming out of Egypt; and that this continued to be the Jewish Sabbath, typical, as all their ordinances were, and that upon the resurrection of Christ the Sabbath reverted to its original seventh day. Many learned men have been of this opinion, and, if they have not fully proved it, they have made it very probable. And this opinion seems to be countenanced by what St. Paul says in his epistle.

to the Hebrews, ch. iv. where, speaking of the Jews, he says, "they entered not into the promised rest on account of their unbelief;" and that David, long after, speaks of "another rest," and of "another day," or season, in which it might be sought; he concludes that "there remained a rest, or sabbatism, for the people of God;" that is, a "New Testament Sabbath, a Christian Sabbath, in which believers rest in the finished work of Christ, and enjoy a foretaste of the heavenly rest."

The word *Remember* seems to intimate the necessity of preparing for it. We should remember on the Saturday, that the Lord's Day is at hand. People in trade prepare for the *market-day*; and why should not Christians get ready for the Sabbath, which is the market-day for their souls. It is a great sin that wages are paid, provisions bought, houses cleaned, perhaps linen washed, on the Sunday morning. By these, and other worldly employments, the best part of the day is lost, and perhaps only some of the last hours of it, if any at all, are devoted to God. We must *Remember* the Sabbath Day, and so prepare for it, as to be ready for the service of God, and devote the whole of the day to it.

In the further consideration of this text we shall,

I. Show *how* the Sabbath is to be kept holy; and,

II. Give some reason *why* it should be kept holy:

In keeping the Sabbath holy we are to consider, what *ought not* to be done, and what *ought* to be done.

What *ought not* to be done is expressed in these words, "Thou shalt not do any work—thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates." Six days are allowed for labour, but the seventh is a day of rest. Our worldly business, whatever it be, must be laid aside. The *whole* family, as well as the master of it, must cease from worldly employments; and this commandment is directed particularly to masters of families, who are to take care that all persons under their roof keep the Sabbath.

We cannot suppose that only *work*, or manual labour, or trade, is here forbidden. Every thing is forbidden, that is inconsistent with the design of the day; which is, to *serve* God, and edify our souls. Travelling, walking,

or riding, for mere pleasure, trifling visits, paying or receiving wages, frequenting public houses, writing letters, settling accounts, reading books on ordinary subjects, yea, conversation of a worldly kind, are here forbidden. Many, who will not *work* on the Lord's Day, will *play*, and take their pleasure: But this is worse than working. St. Austin, long ago observed, that "It is better to *plough* on the Sabbath than to *dance*."

The Sabbath is as much profaned by *idleness* as by business. Mere rest of body is the Sabbath of a beast, not of man. We have immortal souls, and this is the day in which their eternal welfare is to be sought. We have the authority of God for these assertions, Is. lviii. 13. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath,"—from trampling upon it, or from travelling on it, or from walking at large, as if under no restraint—from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, that is, from carnal pleasure—doing that which is agreeable to thy corrupt inclinations; "and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable," esteeming it above all other days, taking holy pleasure in the ways of God; "and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words;" not gratifying the flesh, nor indulging in trifling and impertinent conversation; *then*, saith the Lord, "thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord," &c.—thou shalt have the honour, profit, and pleasure of it; for God hath blessed this day.

But some will say—What, is nothing at all to be done on the Sabbath? I answer, *Works of NECESSITY and MERCY are allowed*; they were so by the Jewish law. Our Saviour healed the sick on that day, and reproved the Pharisees for their severity and rigour in their observance of it; shewing, that if it was lawful to feed or water a beast, it was certainly lawful to do good to men on that day; observing, also, that *the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath*;—it was made for the good of man, both in body and soul; and therefore he is not to be prevented from that which is necessary to his comfortable support. Doubtless, the getting of food, clothing ourselves *decently*, visiting the sick, bestowing alms, taking care of *children*, and many other things, are lawful on the Sabbath.

But great care must be taken that this indulgence is not carried too far. That cannot be accounted a work of necessity or mercy, which may be done on Saturday, or deferred till Monday. Many abuse the Sabbath by journeys to see their relations and friends, which might be done on other days. Others begin or finish journeys on that day, to save their own time on the week days. Marriages and Funerals are often celebrated on the Lord's Day, which might as well be on another day ; for hereby many persons are hindered from the proper duties of the Sabbath. Far the greater parts of visits made on this day are unlawful, as they occupy the time that ought to be spent either in public or private worship, and divert the mind from religious thoughts. Many vainly attempt to sanctify their journeys and visits by going to a place of worship, though they spend most of the day in travelling, feasting, or idle conversation ; but this is, in many cases, only a refined hypocrisy. Nor is it much better, for persons to wander miles from home to hear different preachers, if they can hear the true Gospel at home. Even the beasts are not to be employed *unnecessarily* ; though they may doubtless be used, if they are conscientiously employed to contribute to our serving God the better. *Feasting* our friends on the Lord's Day is a grievous sin, as it employs too much time and care, and tends to make persons less fit for devotion. It is also very blameable to take up much time in dress, and still more so, to employ others in it. How sad a reflection is it that 10,000 hairdressers are perhaps employed every Sunday ! Not to mention the vast number of coachmen, chaise-drivers, hostlers, publicans, and servants of all descriptions ; thousands of whom are constantly debarred from the means of grace, and live and die—like Heathens.

There are also very many who deceive themselves, by attempting to compound matters with the blessed God : they will give him formally, an hour or two of the day, and employ all the rest in a worldly manner. Where do we read in Scripture of Canonical hours, or find a distinction between church hours and others ? Does not the text say, "Remember the Sabbath DAY, to keep it holy ?" And by what arguments can it be proved that a Sabbath Day is shorter than another ? Do other days consist of 12 or 24

hours, and this of 4, or 3, or 2? If you employ a man, and pay him for a day, will you be satisfied if he works at 11 in the morning and leave off at 1, and no more all the day? Is not this the true cause of being satisfied with serving God so short a time, dislikes the service? And is not that an evident being in a carnal state, and under the wrath of God's conscience answer it.

But this commandment not only forbids worldly employments on the Sabbath, it requires that the whole day be spent in a religious manner, especially in *the private exercise of God's worship*.

We should begin the day with *private prayer*. It is necessary to prepare our minds for public worship. We ought to rise early, in order that ourselves and our families may be in time at the house of God. *Early, says the Psalmist, will I seek thee.* Those who are alive should be ashamed of rising later on a Sabbath than on another day. Surely the care of our souls demands as early an attention as the affairs of our body. The family, if possible, should attend the morning service. In some cases, perhaps, this cannot be: but the comparison of a hot dinner is a poor excuse for delaying even one servant at home. Those who fear God may be told, that family as well as private prayer should be offered up, before we go to the public worship.

PUBLIC WORSHIP is most evidently an ordinance of God, of the greatest possible importance. From the beginning of the world, the true worshippers of God have assembled together on this day, for prayer, praise, and instruction. They were always "glad, when invited up to the house of the Lord." They accounted it in his courts better than a thousand." Our Saviour testified public worship by his own presence and example. "The zeal of his Father's house ate him up," he has commanded his Gospel to be "preached to all the world," and has promised, "that when two or three are gathered together in his name, he will be with them."

To assemble ourselves with our fellow Christians on the Lord's Day is, therefore, the bounden duty of all who mean to relinquish Christianity. And yet,

plorable to consider, that, perhaps, three-fourths of the people of England totally desert the house of God. We justly lament the avowed infidelity of a neighbouring country ; but what shall we say of Britons, who call themselves Christians, and yet never profess their faith by public acts of homage to their God and Saviour ? We know what excuses are made both by rich and poor ; but we know also, that these excuses will not be admitted by the great Judge of quick and dead. Some will say, " We need not go to church, for we know as much as the minister can teach us." If so, you are either very wise, or he is very ignorant. If you are so wise, much may be expected from you ; but it is no part of your wisdom, to neglect one of the main branches of your duty, in which you ought to seek the glory of God, the welfare of your soul, and the good of your neighbour. Jesus Christ has appointed that his ministers should preach his Gospel ; and if it is their duty to preach, it is certainly the people's duty to hear : and if you may choose to absent yourself, why may not another ? why may not all ? What then becomes of Christ's ordinance ; or, where is your obedience to him as a King in Zion ? O remember what he has said concerning this very thing, Luke x. 16. " He that heareth you, heareth me ; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me." Yes, sirs, whatever pretences may be made, the person who habitually neglects the worship of God in public, will be held guilty of despising Christ.

But it is not enough merely to attend. We should go with a serious mind, desirous of humbling ourselves before God for our sins, in the confession of the church ; earnestly seeking pardon and grace in the petitions offered up ; and cheerfully joining in the praises and thanksgivings. Our attendance at a place of worship should not be to see and be seen ; to be observed by others, and to make our observations on them ; as appears often to be the case by the conversation of persons when the service is over. Neither should we sit as critics and judges of the minister, merely to praise or blame : for it is plain, that many either know nothing at all of the sermon when they come away, or only pronounce it a good or bad one. Our business is to seek the teaching of Christ by his Spirit,

through the minister. "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth!" should be the language of every soul.

There are some who excuse themselves from public worship on account of their *mean clothing*. But is a man so poor that he cannot get better? still let him wait upon God. "Godliness hath the promise of this life, as well as of that to come." Had the poor man served God better, perhaps he had not been so poor; certainly this is true, if idleness and extravagance occasioned his poverty. But it may be, it is the hand of God which has brought him so low; his poverty is not his fault, but his affliction. Still let him seek and serve the Lord; wait upon God, who knows what things thou hast need of, and knows how to supply all thy wants. Yea, it is probable, that some of thy fellow worshippers will pity thy case, and assist thee in getting employment or raiment. And as to the contempt of the proud, fear it not. Good men will pity thee. They must be bad, indeed, who will despise thee; regard them not.

There are others who excuse themselves from public worship by saying—"We do not see that people who attend are better than others. We are as good as they." What have you to do with others? To their own master they stand or fall. Perhaps they would do worse, if they did not so; perhaps you would do better, if you did. If they *abuse* the means of grace, will that excuse your *neglecting* them? But your business is with yourselves.—Worship God.

But the worship of God in public is not the whole duty of the Sabbath; *reading the Scriptures* at home is equally a necessary part of it. Indeed they ought to be read daily; but as most persons have more time on the Lord's day, they should *then* be particularly studied. Meditation, or fixed, affectionate *thinking* upon the things of God with examination of our heart and ways, is another branch of duty. Those who have families should take care that they all improve the day, both in public and private. The neglect of this is the sad cause of so much Sabbath-breaking. But heads of families may tremble to think, that they partake of the sins of children and servants, if they do not endeavour to restrain them. Parents should catechise their

children ; and enquire what they remember and understand of the sermons they hear. Above all, earnest prayer should be offered up, and with the whole family ; and that, not only on the Sabbath evening, but on the morning also ; and indeed on the morning and evening of every day in the week.

II. Let us briefly consider the reasons why we should sanctify the Sabbath.

The authority of God is of itself a sufficient reason.—God commands ; let man obey. It is at his peril, if he refuses. Surely we owe this obedience to him who made us, and in whom “ we live, and move, and have our being.” We are indebted to him for every breath we draw ; and is it too much for us, in return for all his kindness, to separate one day in seven to his blessed service, that we may know him, love him, please him, and glorify him ? Surely this is “ our reasonable service.”

The goodness of God calls us to it. If God had not appointed a Sabbath, some cruel masters would have allowed their servants no rest from their toil ; yea, covetous men would perhaps have destroyed themselves by their labour. But, by the goodness of God in this merciful appointment, the wearied body of the labourer is refreshed, and in the cheerful service of his God his mind is enlivened ; and thus is he fitted for the duties of another week : while his immortal soul is prepared by divine grace for a happier world hereafter.

The example of God is another argument. “ In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and rested the seventh day.” The whole work of creation was finished in six days ; after which nothing new was made. God then rested, “ not as one weary, but as one well pleased with the instances of his own goodness, and the manifestations of his own glory ;” and this he did as an example to man. The patriarchs rested in the contemplation of God’s works of creation. The Jews rested in the thankful remembrance of their redemption from Egypt. And Christian believers now rest in the finished work of Christ’s redeeming love.

God’s blessing this day is another reason why we should keep it holy. The Sabbath is a blessed day, for God hath

blessed it. He expects us to bless him on it, and we may expect him to bless us. He does bless it. From the beginning of the world until now, his people have found it good for them to wait upon God. His service is perfect freedom. His ways are full of pleasure. "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will be glad and rejoice therein."

APPLICATION.—How awfully is the day of God profaned! It is a great sin. It is a national sin; for though the laws of England require us to obey this law of God, yet it is despised by all sorts of people. The great and rich set the example. They generally travel on the Lord's Day. Others of them have feasts, and some music and card parties; while others ride abroad to shew their fine horses and carriages. Tradesmen, casting off all regard to religion, form parties of pleasure, and resort to the country for carnal amusement. Inferior persons spend the day in idleness, drinking, and lewdness. Thus, all sorts of people conspire to cast contempt on the authority of God, to ruin their own souls, and bring down judgments on a wicked land. In some parts of this kingdom, the Sabbath seems almost forgotten; and though the church-bell rings, and the shops are shut, yet people buy and sell, drink and swear, proclaiming to all men, that the fear of God is not before their eyes. Magistrates and church-wardens take little or no care to prevent these evils, and so become partakers of other men's sins.

But stop, and consider what will be the end of these things? Will not God require it? He certainly will. Yea, he often shews his anger now against Sabbath-breaking. It is dreadful to consider how many persons are drowned, or otherwise destroyed, while committing this sin. There are ten times more accidents of this kind on the Lord's day than other days. Sabbath-breaking is the inlet of all other evils, and the certain road to ruin. Habits of vice, contracted by evil company on this day, are often their own panishment in this world. The drunkard beggars his family, and destroys his constitution; and the thief commonly ends his days at the gallows. How many dying malefactors have warned others to avoid this sin, confessing that it was by breaking the Sabbath they were brought

such a dreadful end. O Sirs, if you have the reason men, if you have any fear of God, if you have any regard for your family or country, if you have any love your precious souls—"Remember the Sabbath-day, keep it holy."

And, O, be thankful for this privilege, you who enjoy it. Blessed be God, the Sabbath is not abolished in England, it is in France. May God ever preserve to us the blessing of a Christian Sabbath, and enable us to employ it rightly. Let it be remembered, that "bodily service profiteth little;" God says, "My son, give me thine heart." Let him be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Attendance on the means of grace will answer little purpose, unless we are brought by the influence of his Holy Spirit, to know and feel our lost and ruined state as sinners, and are led to know Christ as revealed in the Gospel, and believe on him to the saving of our souls. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." Let us therefore "take heed what we hear," that it is the Gospel the free grace of God, and not a system of mere moralising; which never converted a soul yet, nor ever will: and let us take heed how we hear," that it be seriously, and with a desire "to be taught of God." Let us "mix faith with the work that it may profit our souls." Let us lay it in our hearts, and practise it in our lives. Thus shall our sabbaths on earth prepare our souls for the perfect knowledge, love, likeness, and enjoyment of God our Saviour, in the realms of everlasting happiness above. To which may God, of his infinite mercy in Christ, bring us all! Amen and Amen.

SERMON XXXII.

THE ONLY FOUNDATION.

1 Cor. iii. 11. For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

A FOUNDATION is that part of a building which is first laid, and upon which all the rest stands: if the foundation of a building is bad, or gives way, the whole edifice

thus, "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, even so, by the obedience of one, many are made righteous." Being made perfect through obeying and suffering, he became the author of eternal salvation. He is now able to save sinners to the uttermost. He has the finite merit of his obedience to atone for their disobedience. He has the infinite merit of his suffering to deliver them from suffering. He died to save them from the condemnation of death. He rose again, that they might rise to a newness of life here in grace, and to life everlasting in glory. And he now ever lives to make intercession, and to act as a Mediator between God and man, able and willing to plead the merit of his life and death, for the acceptance of every sinner who comes to God the Father through him.

Thus is Jesus Christ the foundation of all our acceptance with God. Thus St. Paul speaks, Eph. i. 6, "the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." Christ is the beloved of the Father, "his dear Son." In him he is well pleased—pleased with his person—pleased with his atonement—it was a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour. And for his sake, he is well pleased with us, if we believe in him; he accepts us, *in him*, and loves us as his dear child. This is being saved by grace. This secures all the glory to God; and his free grace, which is praise-worthy and glorious, is magnified by men and angels.

In this way only have sinners been saved from the beginning. The Lord God clothed Adam and Eve with skins of those beasts they slew in sacrifice, and thus they were accepted through faith in the righteousness of the great Sacrifice, and not by their own righteousness, derived by the fig-leaves with which they clothed themselves. It was faith in the promised Lamb of God that rendered Abel and his offering more acceptable than Cain and his offering. Thus Abraham was justified, for he believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness. The righteousness, St. Paul says, "was witnessed by the law and the prophets—even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all that believe."

And now, men and brethren, let it be asked—Is this foundation? Whatever we look to, hope in, or depend upon

for our acceptance with God, that is our foundation. But it highly concerns us to know whether it be this true and solid foundation, this "rock of ages," or some other, which will fail us in the day of trial. Whatever our foundation be, if it be not Christ, it is wrong; for our text says—"other foundation can no man lay than CHRIST." Now, is any man building his hopes on his own works? Is he saying, "I am not so great a sinner as some men are—I do no harm—I do my best endeavours—I have a good heart—I say my prayers—I go to church—I am sorry for my sins—I am charitable to the poor, and so on." Suffer me to ask—*is this Christ?* All this is building on *self*. It discovers a total ignorance of our sinful state by nature, and a total ignorance of the Gospel which reveals the righteousness of Christ. Besides, if we could work out a righteousness of our own, then there was no occasion for Jesus, and he died in vain. O let us beware of stumbling, as the Jews did, at this stumbling stone, Rom. ix. 32. for whoever seeks acceptance by the works of the law, stumbles against this rock, instead of building on it. And so St. Peter speaks, "Unto you who believe, he is precious"—he is speaking of Christ as the precious corner stone of the church; but, he adds, "he is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient," 1 Peter ii. 7, 8. On the contrary, he makes it the true character of all believers, that they "come to Christ, the living stone, and are built upon him, a spiritual house." And this leads us in the next place to shew, that

III. Jesus Christ is the foundation of all *holy obedience*.

Many persons are afraid that the doctrine of faith is contrary to good works; and some have said—"If we are not to be saved by good works, what occasion is there for them? We answer, "Good works are the breath of faith." A living man breathes, and a true faith works. St. James speaks of pretended, or dead faith, and says, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." Works are the proper fruit and evidence of faith, and that which doth not produce them is false. But the right faith, that which comes to Christ as the foundation, and builds alone on him, is always fruitful. And so far is it from being true, that faith is contrary to good works, that we affirm, there can be no good works without

faith. The Scripture saith, "Without faith it is impossible to please God," and it declares, that "Faith worketh by love;" and again, that it *purifies the heart*; and again, that it *overcomes the world*; not that faith does all this by its own power, but as it unites us to Christ, and derives virtue from him; and thus he is the foundation of all holy obedience.

Man, in his natural state, cannot perform any holy obedience. He wants both will and power, until his person be accepted through Jesus Christ, and united to him by true and lively faith. The doctrine of the Church of England on this point is very clear and full. In the 13th article she says, that "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God; forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Christ—yea, rather for that they are not done, as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin." What then becomes of the merit of works? And how absurd is it, as Bishop Beveridge observes, to think of "being justified by good works, when we can do no good works till we are first justified." Our fallen nature is wholly sinful. "In our flesh dwelleth no good thing;" and till we are in Christ, and so made new creatures, no good thing can dwell in us. "He that believeth not is condemned already." He is in the state of a rebel condemned to die, who cannot do any legal action till the attainder be removed. Besides, the dominion of sin in a natural man is absolute and universal. Sin reigns in his mortal body; he obeys it in the lusts thereof; he willingly yields his members as instruments of unrighteousness, uncleanness, and iniquity. He is the slave of the devil, led captive by him at his will. Satan says to him, be drunk, be lewd, be profane, and the wretched slave submits, even though his poor body suffers for it, and he sees death and damnation before his eyes. This also the church strongly affirms in her 10th article. "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works to faith and calling upon God: wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing (going before) us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when

we have that good will." This is the doctrine of Scripture—"It is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure," Phil. ii. 13.

There is a real, spiritual, though mysterious, union between Christ and believers, and it is expressed in Scripture by various images. For instance, Christ is the *head* of the body; believers are the members of it. Christ is the *vine*; believers are the branches. So he said to his disciples, John xv. "I am the vine, ye are the branches. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me, (or separate from me) *ye can do nothing.*" It is, therefore, evident that Christ must be the foundation of all holy obedience. It is not enough to be what the world calls a virtuous man, a good liver, a moral person. Acceptable obedience is that which is performed by a man in Christ; one, who, sensible of his sin and misery, has come to him by faith for wisdom, then for righteousness, and now for strength. Christ dwells in the heart of such a man; and whatever trial he has to bear, whatever duty he has to perform, whatever temptation he has to resist, he comes to Christ for strength, and "out of his fulness he receives, and grace for grace"—grace in the believer, answerable in some measure to grace in the Saviour. He is conformed to Christ both in his death and resurrection; by the influence of the one, he dies to sin; by that of the other, he lives to God.

Brethren, is it so with you? There are many who seem advocates for virtue and morality, and some, like the Pharisees, who abound in works of devotion; while, like them, they wash only the outside of the cup and platter; forgetting that the heart must first be purified, and the person accepted, before there can be any works performed pleasing and acceptable to God. We are not to imagine that our own good desires and endeavours will recommend us to God, that when we have done all the good we can, we may venture to hope in his mercy, and trust Christ, as a make-weight to fill up our defects. No; exactly otherwise. We must first come to God, by Christ, as miserable sinners; receive from him the pardon of our

sins and acceptance of our persons; and then seek the sanctification of our natures by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the last place,

IV. We are to shew that Christ is the foundation of *all true happiness*, here and hereafter.

Every man longs to be happy: but few are so. The reason is, men seek the living among the dead. It is not in the power of worldly things to make us happy. Sin has written *Vanity* on all the creatures, and filled the world with sorrow. Man in his search for happiness, has turned his back on God, the fountain of true felicity; nor can he ever be happy till he returns to God. This can only be by Jesus Christ. Happiness must commence in reconciliation to God. It was once well said by a minister who happened to be at an inn, where he heard some persons full of vain and noisy mirth—"Gentlemen, said he, if your sins are forgiven, you do well to be merry." But what title has that man to happiness, who is a child of wrath and under the curse of the broken law? But when a sinner has fled for refuge to Christ, he is entitled to strong consolation. He that believeth hath everlasting life. Being justified by faith, he hath peace with God. *Be of good cheer*, said Christ to some, *your sins are forgiven you*. And it is the happiness of some now to know this assuredly. Having the Spirit of God as a spirit of conviction, humiliation, faith, prayer, and holiness, they have thereby the *seal* of God, the *witness* or *testimony* of God, that they have passed from death unto life. They taste that the Lord is gracious. They find solid delight in his word and ways. A day spent in his courts is better than a thousand, and they prefer an hour of communion with him to all the years they spent in vanity and sin.

This is the earnest of heaven. Their happiness now is in having Christ with them. Their happiness hereafter shall consist in being with Christ, to behold and to share his glory. An inheritance is reserved for them, which is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away. Freed from this body of sin and death, delivered from this present evil world, they shall be for ever employed in admiring, *adorning*, and praising the riches of free, sovereign and *distinguishing* grace. At present we are unable to form a just idea of heavenly glory, but this we know as to tr

happiness, whether on earth or in heaven, Jesus Christ is all in all.

To conclude. We have now seen that Jesus Christ is the foundation of all true wisdom—of all acceptance with God—of all obedience, and of all real happiness. And is he so to us? Do we apply to him, that we may become wise to salvation? Do we seek and expect pardon and acceptance only through him? Do we derive grace and strength from him? And is he the source of our happiness? Important enquiries, brethren, worthy your serious attention! O, you that build for eternity, examine your foundation, for if it be not *Christ*, it will fail. The house will fall, and great will be the fall of it.

But some have believed through grace. Take encouragement from what God himself says, in commendation of this foundation, Isa. xxviii. 16. "Behold I lay in Sion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone; a precious corner-stone; a sure foundation. He that believeth, shall not make haste."—*A stone*. Every thing else is sliding sand, is yielding air, is a breaking bubble. *A tried stone*. Tried by millions of depraved and ruined creatures, who always found him able and willing to save to the uttermost. *A corner-stone*, uniting Jews and Gentiles, and all believers, in one harmonious bond of brotherly love. *A precious stone*. More precious than rubies; the pearl of great price; and the desire of all nations. *A sure foundation*. Such as no pressure can shake; such as will never fail those humble penitents, who cast their burden on the Lord. *Whosoever believeth*, though pressed with adversities, or surrounded by dangers, shall not make haste. He shall possess his soul in patience. And not only amidst the perilous changes of life, but even in the day of judgment he shall stand with boldness. He shall *look up* to the grand Arbitrator—*look round*, on all the solemnity of his appearance—*look forward*, to the unalterable sentence—and neither feel anxiety, nor fear damnation.

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